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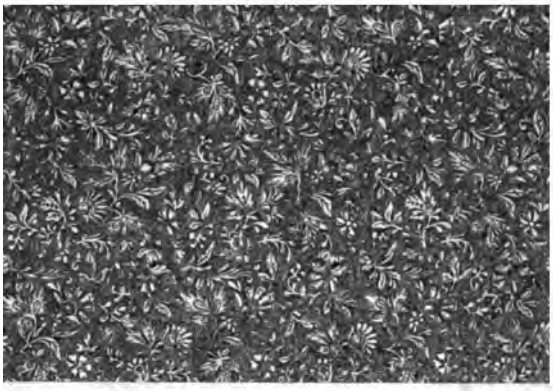

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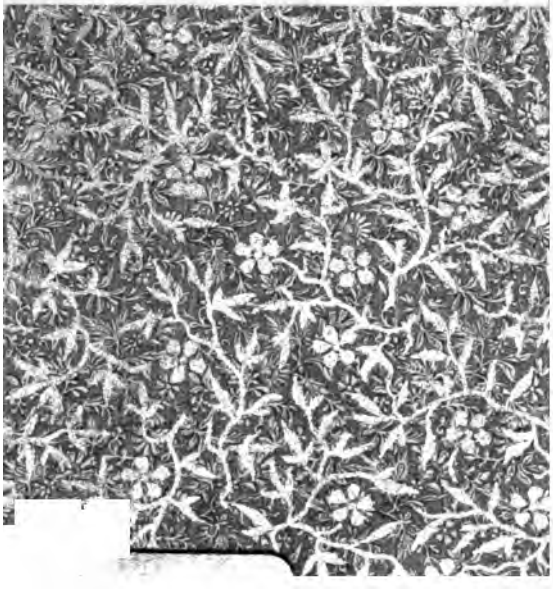

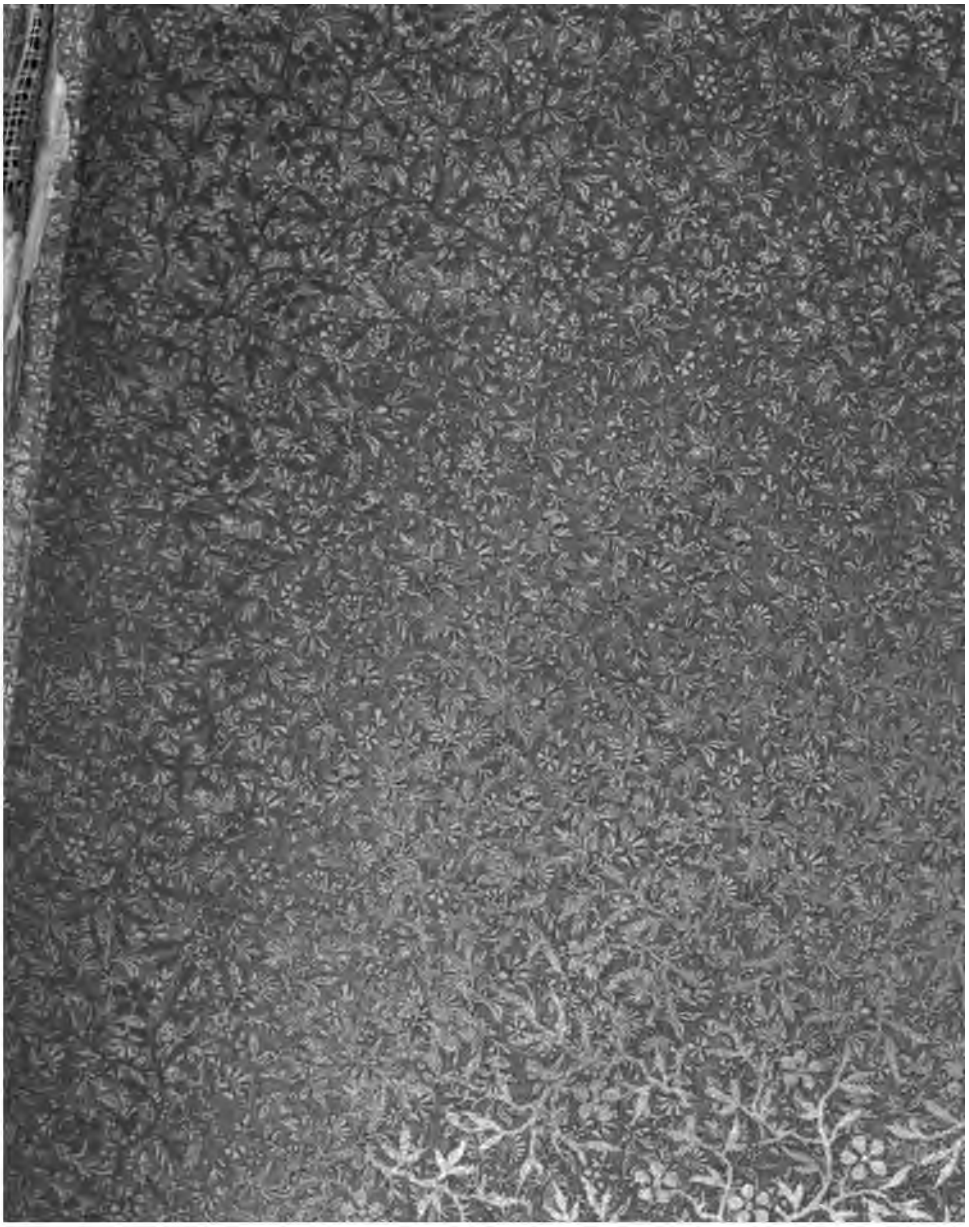

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AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY P. SCHMAUS.

"They went forward and back smiling to each other and balancing."

(See page 209)

SHORT STORIES

OF THE

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF LIFE

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

VOL. XV

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LES DIMANCHES D'UN BOURGEOIS

CHAPTER I.

Preparing for Excursions

Monsieur Patissot, born in Paris, having failed in his studies at the Collège Henri IV., obtained employment in a government department through the influence of one of his aunts, who kept a cigar store where a chief clerk of the department bought his supply of tobacco. He advanced very slowly and would perhaps have died a fourth-class clerk, had it not been for the benevolent Providence that watches over us all.

When he was about fifty-two years old, he had only begun to explore, as a tourist, that region of France which lies between the fortifications of Paris and the provinces proper. The history of his promotion may be of use to a great many clerks, just as the description of his outings may help a number of Parisians to plan their own

trips, thus being able to avoid certain mishaps which befell him.

In 1854, M. Patissot was making only eighteen hundred francs a year. His peculiar disposition rendered him unpopular with his superiors, who let him linger in an eternal and hopeless expectation of the clerk's ideal, an increase of salary.

Though he worked conscientiously, he did not know how to push, being, he said, too proud to do it. His pride consisted in refusing to bow and scrape before his superiors, after the manner of some of his fellow-workers whom he declined to name. He used to add that his bluntness embarrassed many persons, for, like all the rest, he criticised injustice and the favoritism that was shown to outsiders, strangers to the department. But his indignant voice never passed the door of the little box in which he worked.

First as a clerk, then as a Frenchman, and finally as a man of order, he adhered from principle to all established forms of the government, having a religious reverence for power when it belonged to others than his own chiefs.

Every time he found the chance, he would stand where he could see the Emperor pass, that he might have the honor of raising his hat, and he would depart very proud at having bowed to the Chief of the State.

After repeatedly contemplating the sovereign, he followed the example of a great many of his fellow-citizens: he copied the cut of his Majesty's beard, of his coat, his style of wearing his hair, his walk, even his mannerisms,—how many men in every

country seem reproductions of the reigning sovereign! Indeed, he did resemble Napoleon III. slightly, but his own hair was black, so he dyed it. The likeness then was striking, and when he chanced to see in the street a man who also resembled the imperial person, he would feel jealous and eye him disdainfully!

This desire of aping some distinguished person grew to be a mania with him, and having heard an usher of the Tuileries imitate the Emperor's speech, he, too, gradually adopted the intonation and studied slowness of his Majesty's voice.

He became so identified with his model that they could easily have been mistaken for each other; many persons in the department, even high officials, began to notice the likeness, and regarded it as unseemly and even vulgar. They spoke of it to the minister, who summoned the clerk before him. But when he laid eyes on the Emperor's counterpart he burst out laughing and repeated several times: "This is funny, really, very funny!" His words were noised around, and the following day Patissot's immediate chief proposed his subordinate for an increase in salary of three hundred francs, which was immediately granted. From that time, he was promoted regularly, thanks to his simian faculty of imitation. His chiefs even went so far as to imagine that some high honor would come to him one day, and addressed him with deference.

But when the Republic was proclaimed it brought disaster. He felt absolutely crushed and lost his head; he stopped dyeing his hair, shaved off his imperial and had his hair cropped close, thus acquiring

an inoffensive and benevolent expression that was most uncompromising.

Then his chiefs sought revenge for the long time he had imposed on them, and, having become Republicans through the instinct of self-preservation, they persecuted him and delayed his promotion. He, too, changed his political faith, but as the Republic was not a living being to whom one might bear a likeness and as its presidents followed one another in rapid succession, he found himself in a predicament, and felt thwarted in his instinct of imitation, because his attempt to copy his latest ideal, M. Thiers, had utterly failed. His peculiar fancy, however, led him to seek continually a new manifestation. He reflected long and earnestly, and one morning appeared at the office with a new hat, the right side of which was decorated with a tiny tricolor rosette. His colleagues were astonished and laughed over it for days. But the gravity of his bearing finally awed them, and again his chiefs felt worried. What mystery lay behind this rosette? Was it only a manifestation of patriotism, the confirmation of his adherence to the Republic, or was it the secret sign of some powerful association?

As he wore it so persistently, his colleagues thought he must have some occult and powerful protection. They decided that at all events it was wise to be on guard, especially as the unruffled calmness with which he received their pleasantries increased their apprehensions. They treated him with great regard, and thus his sham courage saved him, for on the first day of January, 1880, he was appointed head-clerk.

His whole life had been spent indoors. He had remained single for love of tranquillity, as he hated noise and motion. He spent his Sundays reading tales of adventure and ruling blotters, which he used to present to his colleagues. In his whole life he had taken but three vacations of a week each, in order to move to new quarters. Once in a while, on a holiday, he would take an excursion-train to Havre or to Dieppe, to expand and elevate his soul by contemplation of the ocean.

He was full of that common sense which borders on stupidity. For a long time he had been living quietly and economically, temperate out of prudence, continent by temperament, when suddenly he was seized with a sickening apprehension. One evening in the street he had an attack of dizziness that made him fear a stroke of apoplexy. He betook himself to a doctor, and received for five francs the following diagnosis:

"Mr. Patissot, fifty-two years old, a clerk, single. Full-blooded temperament, threatened with apoplexy. Applications of cold water, a moderate diet, plenty of exercise. MONTELLIER, M.D."

Patissot almost collapsed, and during the whole of the following month he worked in his office with a wet towel wrapped around his head like a turban, from which drops of water fell frequently on his work, compelling him to begin it all over again. Every little while he would read over the prescription in the hope of discovering some hidden meaning, and tried to fix upon the kind of exercise that would insure him against apoplexy.

He consulted his friends, to whom he showed the fatal paper. One of them suggested boxing. He at once hunted up an instructor, and received the very first day an upper-cut which disgusted him forever with this healthful form of exercise. Fencing stiffened him so that he could not sleep for two nights, and the exertion of single-stick almost killed him. Suddenly he had an inspiration. It was to take long walks on Sundays in the suburbs of Paris and in those parts of the city that were unknown to him.

The thought of the means of procuring a proper outfit for these trips filled his mind during a whole week. And on Sunday, the last day of May, he began his preparations. After reading all the queer advertisements that are distributed in the streets by a lot of poor, half-blind, or limping creatures, he went to various shops just to look around, intending to purchase some time later. He first entered a so-called American shoe-shop and asked to see some thick walking shoes. The clerk brought out some contrivances that looked like ironclad battle-ships, bristling all over with nails, and explained that they were manufactured from the hide of the Rocky Mountain bisons. He was so carried away with them that he would gladly have bought two pairs. But one sufficed and he laid down the money and departed, carrying the bundle under his arm, which grew lame from the exertion.

He bought a pair of corduroy trousers such as carpenters wear, and also heavy linen gaiters that reached to his knees. He still needed a knapsack in which to carry his provisions, a field glass to reconnoiter distant villages perched on the slope of the

hills, and an ordnance map for reference, so that he would not have to question the peasants working in the fields.

Then, to be able to endure the heat, he resolved to buy a light alpaca coat, advertised by the well-known firm of Raminau, at the bargain price of six francs fifty.

He went to the shop, and a tall young man with rosy finger-nails, bushy hair, and a pleasant smile, showed him the desired garment. It did not conform to the statements of the advertisement. Patissot inquired hesitatingly: "Will it really wear well?"

The young man simulated perfectly the embarrassment of an honest salesman who does not wish to deceive a customer and, lowering his voice in a confidential manner, he said: "Dear me! Monsieur, you must understand that for six francs and a half we are unable to furnish an article like this, for instance," and he held up a coat very much better than the other.

After looking it over, Patissot asked the price: Twelve francs fifty. It was a temptation. But before making up his mind, he again questioned the clerk, who was watching him narrowly: "Then you guarantee this one? Is it really good?" "Yes, it's quite good, but of course it mustn't get wet! If you want good quality you have it right here, but, there are coats and coats. It is first-rate for the price. Twelve francs fifty, of course, is very little. Naturally, a coat for twenty-five francs would be much better. For this amount you get a very superior article, just as strong as cloth and more durable. After a wetting, a little pressing will make it come out like new; it never

fades and is warmer yet lighter than cloth." And he held up the goods, crumpling, shaking, and stretching it, to show its excellent quality. He spoke convincingly, dispelling the customer's doubts with word and gesture. Patissot bought the coat, and the pleasant salesman tied the bundle, still lauding the value of the acquisition. When the package was paid for he suddenly stopped talking, and with a superior smile, bowing pleasantly while holding the door, he watched his customer depart, Monsieur Patissot, laden with bundles, trying in vain to raise his hat.

At home Patissot studied his map and tried on his ironclad boots which felt as heavy as skates. He slipped and fell, and vowed he would be more careful in the future. Then he laid out his purchases on a chair and contemplated them a long while, finally retiring to his bed, pondering: "How strange I never thought of taking outings before!"

CHAPTER II.

PATISSOT'S FIRST OUTING

MONSIEUR PATISSOT worked listlessly during the whole week, dreaming of the outing he had planned for the following Sunday. He was seized with a sudden longing for the country, for green trees, and the desire for rustic scenes that comes to every Parisian in the springtime took possession of his whole being. He retired early on Saturday night, and was up with the dawn.

His window opened on a dark and narrow courtyard, a sort of shaft, through which floated up all the different odors of the needy families below.

He immediately glanced at the small square of sky that appeared between the roofs, and saw that it was of a deep blue and filled with sunshine.

Swallows darted through it continually, but their flight could be watched only for a second. He thought that from such a height they surely were able to see the country, the green foliage of the wooded hills, and great stretches of horizon.

An insane longing came to him to wander among the cool leaves. So he dressed himself quickly, drew on his heavy boots, and spent a great deal of time lacing the leggings, which were new and strange to him. After strapping his knapsack to his back (it was filled with meat, cheese, and bottles of wine, for the unaccustomed exercise was sure to sharpen his appetite), he started, a stick in his hand. He adopted a well-marked gait (like a soldier's, he thought), whistling lively airs that lightened his step. People turned around to gaze after him, a dog barked at him, and a cabman called out: "Good luck, Monsieur Dumolet." But he paid no attention to them, and marched along briskly, proudly swinging his stick.

The city was awakening in the sunlight and the warmth of a fine spring day. The fronts of the houses shone brightly, canaries warbled in their cages, and a joyousness filled the air, lighting up the faces of the passers-by with an expression of universal contentment with all things.

He walked toward the Seine to take the boat for Saint-Cloud. Amid the staring curiosity of the passers-by, he followed the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, the boulevard, and the Rue Royale, mentally comparing himself to the Wandering Jew. In crossing a gutter he slipped on the nails of his shoes and fell to the ground with a terrible rattling in his knapsack. A passer-by helped him to his feet and he resumed his walk at a slower pace. When he reached the river he waited for a boat.

He watched it approach under the bridges, looking very small at first, then larger, till it finally as-

sumed in his mind the proportions of an ocean steamer, coming to take him for a long trip across the seas, to visit unknown nations and to see unfamiliar sights. The boat came alongside the landing, and he went aboard. Women in their Sunday clothes, with big red faces, were seated everywhere, arrayed in gorgeous gowns and gay ribbons.

Patissot walked to the bow and stood there, with legs apart, like a sailor, to create the impression that he was used to steamers. But as he feared the pitching of the boat, he rested on his stick, so as to be sure of keeping his equilibrium.

After passing the Pont-du-Jour, the river widened, flowing calmly under the dazzling sunlight; then, after passing between two islands, the boat turned a wooded hill where a great many little white houses peeped through the foliage. A voice shouted Bas-Meudon, Sèvres, Saint-Cloud, and Patissot landed.

On the quay, he reopened his map, in order to avoid making any possible mistakes. Everything was quite clear, however. He had only to follow a road that would take him to Celle, where he would turn first to the left, then a little to the right, and afterward would reach Versailles just in time to visit the park before dinner.

The road was hilly, and Patissot puffed and blew, crushed by the weight of his provisions, his legs sore from his gaiters, and his thick shoes feeling as heavy as cast-iron. Suddenly he stopped with a gesture of despair! in the flurry of his departure he had forgotten the field glass!

At last he reached the woods. Then, notwithstanding the terrific heat, and his perspiring brow,

and the weight of his harness and the jerkings of his knapsack, he started on a run or rather on a trot toward the green trees, like some old, worn-out nag.

He entered the deliciously cool shade and gazed tenderly at the thousands of little flowers that grew by the wayside; they looked very delicate on their long stems and were all different, some yellow, some blue, some lavender. Insects of various colorings and shapes, long, short, of wonderful build, monsters both tiny and fearful, were ascending with difficulty the blades of grass, which bent under their weight. And Patissot began to admire creation sincerely. But being exhausted he sat down.

He wanted to take a bite. But on examining his provisions, he was amazed at their condition. One of the bottles had been broken in his fall and the contents, unable to find an outlet through the oilcloth, had made a wine soup of his food.

However, he managed to eat a slice of cold leg of mutton, carefully wiped off, a slice of ham, several crusts of bread, soaked and red, and he quenched his thirst with some fermented claret that was covered with an unappetizing pink foam.

After resting nearly two hours, he again consulted his map and went on his way.

In time, he found himself at an entirely unexpected crossroad. He looked at the sun, tried to locate himself, reflected, studied the multitude of fine cross-lines on his map that represented the roads, and finally reached the conclusion that he was lost.

Before him lay a most alluring path, specked with drops of sunshine that illuminated the white daisies

hidden in the grass. It seemed endless, and was quite still and deserted.

A solitary bumblebee frolicked around, now and then lighting on a flower, to leave it almost immediately for a new resting-place. Its fat body, supported by tiny transparent wings, looked like brown velvet streaked with yellow. Patissot was watching it with keen interest, when something stirred at his feet. At first he was frightened and jumped aside, but stooping carefully, he saw that it was a frog no larger than a nut, which was making gigantic leaps.

He bent down to catch it, but it slid between his fingers. Then, with infinite precautions, he crawled toward it on his hands and knees, advancing very slowly, and looking like a tremendous waddling turtle, with his knapsack on his back. When he was near enough to the little creature, he prepared his attack, threw out both hands, fell flat on his nose in the grass, and picked himself up, clutching two handfuls of dirt but no frog. He looked for it a long time, but in vain.

As soon as he was on his feet, he perceived, at a great distance, two figures coming toward him and making signs. A woman was waving a parasol and a man in shirt-sleeves was carrying a coat over his arm. Then the woman began to run, calling out: "Monsieur! Monsieur!" He wiped his brow and replied: "Madame!"

"Monsieur, we are lost, positively lost," said the lady, as she approached him.

A feeling of shame prevented him from making a similar confession and he gravely asserted: "You are on the road to Versailles."

"What, on the road to Versailles? Why, we are going to Rueil," said she.

He was taken aback, but nevertheless replied calmly: "Madame, I will prove to you with my map that you are really on the road to Versailles."

The husband approached. He wore a hopeless, distracted expression. His wife, a young and pretty brunette, grew furious as soon as he drew near. "Now see what you've done! Here we are at Versailles. Please look at the map that Monsieur is kind enough to show you. Are you able to read? *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* how stupid some people are! Didn't I tell you to take to the right? But you wouldn't listen, no, you think you know everything!"

The poor fellow seemed exceedingly distressed, and replied: "But, my dear, it is you—"

She refused to let him continue and began to reproach him with all the misfortunes of all their life, from their marriage to that moment. But he kept casting despairing glances toward the woods, anxiously scanning the path and uttering from time to time a piercing sound something like a single word, "Tuit." This did not appear to disturb his wife, but it filled Patissot with astonishment.

Suddenly the young woman, turning with a smile to the chief clerk, remarked: "If Monsieur will permit us, we will accompany him, so as to keep from getting lost and being obliged to sleep in the woods."

As Patissot could not very well refuse, he bowed with a heavy heart, tortured with apprehension, and not knowing where he could lead them.

AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY [illegible] [illegible]

"Patissot found himself delightful [illegible] when he found himself alone in the wood [illegible] with this strange little woman clinging to his arm."

Copyright, 1903, by M. Walter Dunne.

They walked a long while; the man was continually crying: "Tuit"; and at last darkness settled. The veil of mist that hovers over the country at dusk slowly descended and the delightful coolness which fills the woods at nightfall lent a peculiar charm to the atmosphere. The young wife had taken Patissot's arm, and her red lips addressed continual reproaches to her husband, who made no reply but kept on calling: "Tuit" louder and louder. At last the fat clerk inquired: "What is that call for?"

The man, with tears in his eyes, replied:

"I've lost my poor dog!"

"What, you've lost your dog?"

"Yes, we brought him up in Paris and he had never been in the country before. When he saw the leaves he acted like a mad thing. He ran into the woods and I haven't seen him since. He will surely starve to death there."

The young wife shrugged her shoulders: "When a person is as stupid as you are, he cannot keep dogs."

But he had suddenly stopped, and began to feel himself all over. She watched him a moment, and then asked:

"Well, what has happened now?"

"I didn't notice that I had my coat on my arm. I have lost my purse, with my money in it!"

At this turn of affairs the woman choked with rage. Finally she said:

"Well, then go back at once and look for it."

Gently he answered: "Yes, my dear, but where shall I find you?"

Patissot replied boldly: "At Versailles." And he

mentioned the Hotel des Réservoirs, having heard people speak of it.

The husband turned back, anxiously scanning the ground as he walked away, and shouting "Tuit" every minute. It was some time before he disappeared; at last he was lost in the darkness, but his voice still sounded at a great distance uttering its lamentable "Tuit," the call growing sharper and sharper as the path grew darker and his hope became more faint.

Patissot felt delightfully moved when he found himself alone in the woods, at the mysterious hour of dusk, with this little strange woman clinging to his arm. For the first time in all his egotistical life, he had an inkling of poetical love, of the charm of sweet surrender, and of nature's participation in our affections. He racked his brain in vain for some appropriate and gallant expression. But they were nearing a village road, and saw some houses at the right; then a man passed them. Patissot tremblingly inquired the name of the place. The man said it was Bougival.

"What, Bougival? Are you sure?"

"I should think so! I live here."

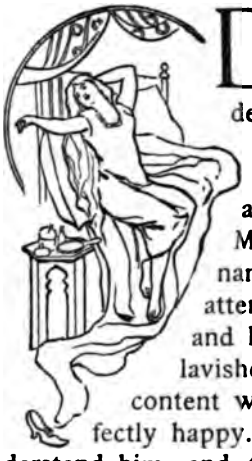
The young woman was laughing uproariously. The idea that her husband was lost filled her with mirth. Patissot found a rustic restaurant near the water, and there they dined. The lady was charming, vivacious, full of amusing stories that turned the head of her companion. When it was time to leave, she exclaimed: "Why, now that I think of it, I haven't a cent of change; you know my husband lost his purse."

Patissot immediately offered her his own, and pulled out a louis, thinking he couldn't lend her less. She said nothing, but held out her hand and took it, uttering a dignified, "Thank you, Monsieur," followed by a pretty smile. Then she tied her bonnet-strings in front of the mirror, refused to let him accompany her, now that she knew her way, and departed like a vanishing bird, leaving Patissot to add up mournfully the expenses of his outing.

He stayed at home the next day on account of a sick-headache.

CHAPTER III.

A Visit



During a whole week Patissot related his adventure to everyone that would listen to him, describing poetically the places he had visited, and growing indignant at the little enthusiasm he aroused among his colleagues. Only Monsieur Boivin, an old clerk nicknamed "Boileau," lent him undivided attention. He lived in the country and had a small garden on which he lavished a great deal of care; he was content with little and was said to be perfectly happy. Patissot was now able to understand him, and the similarity of their tastes made them fast friends. To seal this budding friendship, Père Boivin invited him to breakfast the following Sunday at his little house in Colombes.

Patissot took the eight o'clock train, and after looking a long while discovered in the very heart of the town, an obscure street, a sort of filthy passage-

way inclosed by two high walls. At the end appeared a moldy door fastened with a string wound around two nails. He opened it and was confronted by an indescribable creature, apparently a woman. The upper part of her body was wrapped in a dirty shawl, a ragged skirt hung around her hips, and her frowsy hair was filled with pigeon feathers. Her little gray eyes scanned the visitor inhospitably; after a pause she inquired: "What do you wish?"

"Monsieur Boivin."

"He lives here. What do you want of Monsieur Boivin?"

Patissot was embarrassed, and hesitated.

"Why,—he expects me."

Her manner became fiercer and she replied: "Oh! you're the one, are you, who is coming for breakfast?"

He stammered a trembling "Yes." Turning toward the house she yelled:

"Boivin, here's the man!"

Boivin instantly appeared in the doorway of a sort of plaster structure, covered with tin, that looked something like a *chaufferette*. He wore a pair of soiled white trousers and a dirty straw hat. He shook hands with Patissot and carried him off to what he proudly termed his garden; it was a little piece of ground about as big as a handkerchief, surrounded by houses. The sun shone on it only two or three hours every day; pansies, carnations, and a few rose-bushes vegetated in this dark well, heated like a furnace by the radiation of the sun on the roofs. "We have no trees," he said, "but the high walls are just as good, and it is as shady here as in the woods."

Then, laying his hand on Patissot's arm, he said: "Will you do me a favor? You've seen the old woman,—she isn't very easy, is she? But you haven't heard all, wait till breakfast. Just think, to keep me at home, she locks up my office suit and lets me have only clothes that are too soiled to wear in the city. To-day I'm dressed decently because I told her that you were coming. That's understood. But I cannot water the flowers for fear of soiling my trousers, and if I do that I'm lost! I thought you might do it for me."

Patissot consented, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and began to work the pump, that wheezed and blew like a consumptive and gave out a stream of water about as big as his little finger. It took ten minutes to fill the watering-can. Patissot was dripping with perspiration. Boivin directed his efforts. "Here, water this plant—a little more. That's enough! Now to this one."

The can leaked, and Patissot's feet got more water than the flowers, so that the edges of his trousers were soaked with mud. Twenty times at least he went to and fro, wetting his feet, and perspiring violently whenever he worked the pump handle; and when he was exhausted and wished to stop, old Boivin would pull him by the sleeve, and plead: "Just one more can, just one, and that will be enough."

As a reward, he gave him a full-blown rose which lost all its petals as soon as it came in contact with Patissot's coat, leaving in his buttonhole a sort of greenish pear, that caused him great surprise. He didn't care to make any comment, however, out of politeness, and Boivin did not appear to notice it.

Suddenly Madame Boivin's voice rang out: "Well! are you coming? How many times shall I tell you that it's ready?"

They walked toward the *chaufferette*, trembling like two culprits.

If the garden was shady the house was not, and the heat of the rooms was worse than that of an oven.

Three plates, flanked with greasy forks and knives, had been laid on a dirty wooden table, in the middle of which stood a dish filled with soup-meat and potatoes floating around in some sort of liquid. They sat down and began to eat.

A large decanter filled with pinkish water attracted Patissot's eye. Boivin, slightly embarrassed, mentioned it to his wife saying: "Dear, couldn't you give us to-day a little pure wine?"

She eyed him furiously, then burst out:

"So that you can both get drunk, I suppose, and carouse here all day? No, thank you!" He said no more. After the *ragoût* the woman brought in another dish of potatoes prepared with rancid lard, and when, still silent, they had finished, she declared:

"That's all there is. Now get out."

Boivin stared at her in amazement.

"What has happened to the pigeon you were picking this morning?" he inquired.

She put her hands on her hips.

"You haven't had enough, I suppose? Is it a reason, because you bring people here, to eat up everything there is in the house? What do you think I'll have to eat to-night, sir?"

The two men arose and stood in the doorway. Boivin whispered in Patissot's ear:

"Wait for me a minute, and we'll set out." He went into the next room to finish dressing, and Patissot overheard the following dialogue:

"Give me twenty sous, dear."

"What do you want them for?"

"Why, I don't know what may happen; it is always safer to have some money."

She screamed so as to be heard outside: "No, sir, I shan't give it to you. After this man has breakfasted here, the least he can do is to pay your expenses."

Boivin joined Patissot; the latter, wishing to be polite, bowed to the mistress of the house, stammering:

"Madame — delightful time — many thanks —"

She answered:

"That's all right, but don't you bring him home intoxicated, or you will be sorry!"

And they set out.

They walked to the Seine and stopped in front of an island covered with poplar-trees.

Boivin looked at the river tenderly and squeezed his friend's arm.

"In a week we'll be there, Monsieur Patissot."

"Where shall we be, Monsieur Boivin?"

"Why, at the beginning of the fishing season: it opens on the fifteenth."

Patissot felt a slight tremor pass over him, like the commotion which is felt on seeing for the first time the woman who is to be one's fate. He replied:

"Ah! so you fish, Monsieur Boivin?"

"Do I fish, Monsieur? Why, it's my only delight!"

Patissot then questioned him closely. Boivin named all the fish that frolicked in that dirty water. And Patissot believed that he saw them. Boivin designated the various baits, the hooks, the places and the time favorable to catching each species. And Patissot felt that he knew more about fishing than Boivin himself. They agreed to meet for the overture on the following Sunday, for Patissot's special benefit. He was delighted to have found such an experienced initiator.

They dined in a sort of dark hovel patronized by the fishermen and the rabble of the place. At the door Boivin thought fit to remark:

"It doesn't look like much, but it's very nice inside."

They seated themselves at a table. After the second glass of claret Patissot knew why Madame Boivin gave her spouse reddened water; the little man was losing his head; he talked at random, got up, wanted to play tricks, acted as peacemaker in a drunken quarrel, and would have been killed, as well as Patissot, had not the owner of the place interfered. After the coffee he was so intoxicated that he could not stand, despite his friend's efforts to keep him from drinking; and when they departed Patissot had to guide his faltering steps.

They walked across the meadows, and after wandering around for a long time in the dark, lost their way. Suddenly they found themselves amid a thicket of tall sticks that reached to their noses.

It was a vineyard. They felt around a long time,

unsteady, maudlin, and unable to find a way out. At last Boivin fell over a stick that scratched his face, and he sat down on the ground yelling at the top of his voice with a drunkard's obstinacy, while Patissot, distracted, shouted for assistance.

A belated peasant went to their rescue and put them on the right road.

But as they approached Boivin's home Patissot became timorous. At last they arrived at the door; it was suddenly flung open and Madame Boivin, like the furies of old, appeared with a light in her hand. As soon as she saw her husband she jumped at Patissot, screaming:

"Oh! you scoundrel! I knew that you would get him drunk."

The poor fellow was seized with an insane terror, and, dropping his friend in the slimy gutter of the passageway, he ran as fast as his legs would carry him toward the railway station.

CHAPTER IV.

FISHING

THE day before he was to throw a bait into the river for the first time in his life, Monsieur Patissot bought for eighty centimes a pamphlet entitled, "The Perfect Fisherman."

Besides gleaning from it much useful information, he was greatly impressed with the style, and learned by heart the following excerpt:

"In a word, if you wish to succeed, and be able to fish right and left, up or down stream, without care or precautions of any kind, and with that conquering air that admits of no defeat, then fish before, during, and after a thunderstorm, when the sky opens and is streaked with lightning and the earth echoes with the rolling of thunder; it is then that the fish, either from terror or avidity, forget their habits in a sort of universal and turbulent flight.

"In the confusion resulting, you may follow or neglect all the signs that indicate favorable conditions, for you are sure of marching to victory."

In order to be able to catch fish of different sizes, he bought three poles so constructed as to simulate

walking-sticks in the city; on the river, a slight jerk would transform them into fishing-rods. He purchased the smaller hooks for fry and with sizes 12 and 15 he hoped to fill his basket with carp and flounders. He refrained from buying groundworms, because he knew that he could find them everywhere, but he secured a provision of sandworms.

In the evening, at home, he gazed at them with interest. The hideous creatures swarmed in their bran bath as in putrefied meat. Patissot began to practice fastening them to the hooks. He took one out with disgust, but had hardly laid it on the sharp end of the curved steel before it burst and spilled its insides. He tried to bait a hook at least twenty times without success, and probably would have continued all night had he not feared to exhaust his supply.

He started next morning on the first train. The station was crowded with people armed with fishing-rods, some, like Patissot's, looking like walking-sticks, while others, all in one piece, pointed their slender ends toward heaven, forming as it were, a forest of reeds that clashed and mingled like swords, or swayed like masts above an ocean of broad-brimmed straw hats.

When the locomotive pulled out of the station fishing-rods were sticking out of every window of the train, which looked like a huge spiked caterpillar unrolling itself through the fields.

The passengers got out at Courbevoie, and almost fought to get seats in the diligence for Bezons. A crowd of fishermen swung themselves on top of the omnibus, and as they were holding their rods in their hands,

the conveyance suddenly took on the appearance of a large porcupine.

All along the road men were going in one direction, looking like pilgrims on the way to an unknown Jerusalem. They walked hurriedly carrying tin boxes fastened on their backs,—their swaying rods resembling the staffs of the ancient knights on their way back from Palestine.

At Bezons the river could be seen. The banks were lined with people, many men in frock-coats and others in blouses, women, children, and even young girls; they were all fishing.

Patissot immediately started for the dam where his friend Boivin was waiting. The latter greeted him rather coldly. He had just become acquainted with a big, fat man about fifty years old, having a sunburned countenance, who seemed very well informed on all fishing matters. The three men hired a boat and settled themselves almost under the fall of the dam, where the largest number of fish is generally found. Boivin was ready at once, and having baited his hook he threw it in the river and watched, motionless, with rapt attention, the bobbing of the tiny buoy. Occasionally he would pull the line out of the water and throw it in again further away. The fat man, after throwing his well-baited hooks, laid the rod by his side, filled his pipe and lighted it, folded his arms, and, without glancing once at the cork, dreamily fell to watching the water. Patissot tried to fasten his baits to the hooks, but they burst every time. After a few minutes he hailed Boivin: "Monsieur Boivin, would you be kind enough to put these creatures on the hooks? I have tried, but cannot

succeed." Boivin lifted his head. "I would request you not to interrupt me, Monsieur Patissot; we are not here for pleasure." He baited the line, however, and Patissot threw it into the river, carefully imitating his friend's motions.

The boat pitched recklessly, shaken by the waves and spun around like a top by the current, though it was anchored at both ends; and Patissot, absorbed in the sport, felt vaguely uncomfortable and dizzy.

They had taken nothing as yet; Père Boivin was getting very nervous and was shaking his head despairingly, and Patissot was very greatly affected thereby; only the fat man sat motionless and continued to smoke quietly, without paying the slightest attention to his line. At last, Patissot, becoming quite downhearted, turned to him and remarked sadly:

"They don't bite, do they?"

He simply replied:

"No, they don't!"

Patissot considered him with surprise.

"Do you sometimes make a good haul?"

"Never!"

"What! never?"

The fat man, smoking like a factory chimney, let out the following words which filled his neighbor with consternation:

"You see, I wouldn't like it a bit if they did bite. I don't come here to fish, but merely because I like the spot; you get a good shaking up, as you do on the sea. If I take a rod along, I only do it to appear like the rest of them."

Monsieur Patissot quite to the contrary, was feeling miserable. His discomfort, at first ill defined, was

increasing and taking on a definite form. He felt indeed, as if he were on the ocean and decidedly seasick.

After the first attack had passed off, he proposed that they should leave, but Boivin became furious at this suggestion and almost annihilated him. The fat man, however, moved by pity, insisted on returning, and when Patissot's dizziness was dispelled they bethought themselves of breakfast.

Two restaurants were near at hand. One was quite small and looked like a beer-garden, being patronized by the poorer class of fishermen. The other, called Le Châlet des Tilleuls, looked like a cottage, and drew the *élite* of the sportsmen. The two hosts, born enemies, watched each other with keen hatred across a field that separated them, on which the house of the dam-keeper and *garde-pêche* was built. Of these two officials, one was in favor of the beer-garden and the other of the cottage, and the dissensions of those isolated houses reproduced the history of the entire human race.

Boivin, who patronized the beer-garden, wished to go there, saying: "The service is excellent and it's cheap; you will see. Anyway, Monsieur Patissot, don't hope to get me intoxicated, as you did last Sunday; my wife was furious, and swears that she will never forgive you!"

The fat man declared that Les Tilleuls was the only place for him, because, he said, it was a fine house where the cooking was as good as in the best Paris restaurants. "As you please," replied Boivin, "I'm going where I always go." And he departed. Vexed at his friend, Patissot followed the fat man.

They breakfasted together, exchanged their views on various subjects, communicated their impressions, and discovered that they were made for each other.

After breakfast everyone went back to fish, but the two new friends started to walk along the bank and stopped near the railway bridge. They threw out their lines and began to talk. The fish still refused to bite, but Patissot had become resigned.

A family came up. The father wore a beard and carried an immensely long rod; three boys of different sizes were carrying poles of various lengths, according to age; and the portly mother gracefully held a charming rod decorated at the handle with a ribbon. The father bowed.

"Is this spot favorable, gentlemen?" he inquired.

Patissot was going to speak when his friend answered:

"Fine!"

The whole family smiled and settled around the two fishermen. Patissot felt then an overpowering desire to catch something, just one fish of any kind, if only as big as a fly, so as to win the consideration of these people; and he began to handle his rod as he had seen Boivin handle his that morning. He would let the cork follow the stream to the end of the line, then gave a jerk and pulled the hook out of the river; then describing a large circle in the air, he would throw it in a little farther away.

He was thinking he had mastered the trick of throwing the line gracefully, when suddenly the rod that he had just jerked with a rapid wrist motion caught somewhere behind him. He pulled; a scream rent the air, and he beheld fastened to one of the

hooks and traveling through the sky like a meteor, a magnificent bonnet, trimmed with flowers, which he landed in the middle of the river.

He turned around wildly and let go of his line; it followed the bonnet that was being carried down the river, while the fat man lay on his back and roared with laughter. The lady disheveled and amazed, choked with rage; her husband also grew angry and demanded the price of the bonnet, for which Patissot paid at least three times its value.

Then the whole family departed with much dignity.

Patissot took another rod and sat bathing sandworms until night. His neighbor slept soundly on the grass, and awoke about seven o'clock.

"Let's leave," said he.

So Patissot pulled in his line, but gave a cry and sat down hard in his astonishment. A tiny fish was wriggling at the end of the string. On examining it they found that it was pierced through the middle; the hook had caught in it when being drawn out of the water.

It gave Patissot triumphant, unbounded joy. He wanted it fried for himself alone.

During dinner the intimacy of the two friends increased. Patissot learned that the big man lived in Argenteuil and had sailed boats for thirty years without discouragement. He agreed to breakfast with him the following Sunday, and to take a sail in his clipper, the "Plongeon."

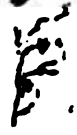
He was so interested in the conversation that he forgot all about his catch. After the coffee it recurred to him and he insisted that it should be served.

It looked like a yellow and twisted match dropped in the middle of the plate. But he ate it with pride, and going home on the omnibus he told his fellow-passengers that he had caught fourteen pounds of fry that day.

CHAPTER V.

Two Famous Men

Monsieur Patissot had promised his friend, the boating man, that he would spend the following Sunday with him. An unforeseen circumstance interfered with his plans. He met one of his cousins whom he very seldom saw. He was an amiable journalist, standing very well in all the various social sets, and he offered his assistance to Patissot to show him all sorts of interesting things.



"What are you going to do next Sunday, for instance?" he inquired.

"I am going to Argenteuil to have some boating."

"Oh, come, now! That's a bore, your boating; there is no variety in it. I'll take you with me. I will introduce you to two celebrated men, and we'll visit the homes of two artists."

"But I am ordered to go to the country."

"I'll make a call on Meissonier, on the way, at his place at Poissy. Then we'll walk to Medan,

where Zola lives. I have a commission to secure his next novel for our journal."

Patissot, wild with joy, accepted the invitation.

He even bought a new frock-coat, that he might make a good appearance, his old one being a little worn, and he was horribly afraid lest he should say foolish things, either to the painter or the man of letters, as most persons do when they speak about an art which they have never practised.

He told his fears to his cousin, who began to laugh, saying to him: "Bah! Only pay compliments, nothing but compliments, always compliments, that carries off the foolish things, if you happen to say any. You know Meissonier's pictures?"

"I should think so!"

"You have read the Rougon-Macquart series?"

"From beginning to end."

"That suffices. Mention a picture from time to time, speak of a novel occasionally, and add 'Superb! Extraordinary!! Delicious execution!! Wonderfully powerful!' That is the way to get along. I know that those two men are fearfully surfeited with everything: but you see praises always please an artist."

Sunday morning they set out for Poissy.

They found Meissonier's place a few steps from the station at the end of the church square. Passing through a low gate painted red, which led into a magnificent arbor of vines, the journalist stopped, and turning toward his companion, asked:

"What do you think Meissonier is like?"

Patissot hesitated. Finally he replied:

"A small man, very well groomed, shaven, and with a military air." The other man smiled and said:

"That is good. Come."

An odd structure built like a chalet appeared at the left, and at the right, almost opposite a little tower, was the main house. It was a singular looking building, with a little of all styles of architecture about it,—the Gothic fortress, the manor, the villa, the cottage, the residence, the cathedral, the mosque, the pyramid, with a strange mingling of Oriental and Occidental methods of building. It was certainly of a most wonderfully complicated style, enough to drive a classical architect crazy; nevertheless, there was something fantastic and beautiful about it, and it had been planned by the painter and executed under his orders.

They entered: a collection of trunks filled a little parlor. A small man appeared clad in a jacket. The most striking thing about him was his beard; it was a prophet's beard, of incredible size, a river, a flood, a Niagara of a beard. He greeted the journalist:

"Pardon me, my dear Monsieur, but I arrived only yesterday, and everything is still at sixes and sevens in the house. Sit down."

The other refused, excusing himself:

"My dear master, I came only to present my homage, as I was passing by." Patissot, very much embarrassed, kept bowing at each of his friend's words, as if by an automatic movement, and he murmured, stammering a little: "What a su-su-superb place!" The painter, flattered, smiled pleasantly, and offered to show it to them.

He led them first to a little pavilion of feudal aspect, in which was his former studio, looking out on a terrace. Then they passed through a drawing-

room, a dining-room, a vestibule full of marvelous works of art, of adorable Beauvais, and hung with Gobelin and Flanders tapestries. But the strange luxury of ornamentation of the exterior became, on the inside, a luxury of prodigious stairways. There was a magnificent stairway of honor, a hidden stairway in one tower, and one for the servants in another; stairways everywhere! Patissot by chance opened a door and retreated stupefied. It was a veritable temple, this place, the name of which respectable people pronounce only in English; an original and charming sanctuary, fitted up in exquisite taste, adorned like a pagoda, the decoration of which had surely cost great efforts of thought!

They next visited the park, which was complex, varied, tortuous with many fine old trees. But the journalist insisted on going away, and with many thanks he left the master.

They met a gardener as they were departing. Patissot asked him: "Has Monsieur Meissonier owned this place long?"

The old man replied: "Oh! Monsieur, I must explain. He bought the land in 1846, but the house—he has torn it down and rebuilt it five or six times. I am sure he has spent two millions on it, Monsieur!"

And Patissot, as he went away, was filled with an immense consideration for the artist, not so much on account of his great success, his fame, and his genius, but because he spent so much money for a fancy, while ordinary *bourgeois* deprived themselves of the gratifying of all fancies in order to hoard money.

After passing through Poissy, they set out on foot along the road to Medan. The highway at first fol-

lows the Seine, which is dotted with charming islands at this place. They climbed a hill to pass through the pretty village of Villaines, descended a bit, and finally reached the section of the country where dwelt the author of the Rougon-Macquart novels.

An old and pretty church, flanked by two little towers, stood on the left. They took a few steps further, and a passing peasant showed them the door of the great writer of romance.

Before entering, they examined the house. It was a great structure, square and new and very tall, and appeared to have given birth, like the mountain and the mouse in the fable, to a tiny white house, nestling at its base. The small house was the original residence, and had been built by the former proprietor. The tower had been erected by M. Zola.

They rang. A huge dog, a cross between a St. Bernard and a Newfoundland, began to growl so fiercely that Patissot felt a vague desire to retrace his steps. But a servant, running forward, quieted the animal, calling it Bertrand, opened the door, and took the journalist's card to carry it to his master.

"If he will only receive us!" murmured Patissot: "I should be very sorry to come so far without seeing him."

His companion smiled:

"Never fear," said he, "I have my own idea about getting in."

But the domestic, returning, simply asked them to follow him.

They entered the new building, and Patissot, greatly moved, puffed as he climbed a stairway of ancient form, leading to the second floor.

He tried at the same time to picture to himself this man, whose glorious name resounded at that moment in all the corners of the world, amid the exasperated hatred of some, the real or feigned indignation of the "upper circles" of society, the envious dislike of certain compeers, the respect of a multitude of readers, and the frantic admiration of a great many: and he expected to see a sort of bearded giant, of terrible aspect, appear, with a resounding voice, and at first not very prepossessing.

The door opened into an extremely large and high room, fully lighted by a window looking out on the plain. Ancient tapestries covered the walls; on the left of the entrance, a monumental fireplace flanked by two stone men, could have burned a hundred-year-old oak-tree in a day; and an immense table, upon which were books, papers, and journals, occupied the middle of this apartment, which was so vast and grand that it at once engrossed the eye, and the attention was only afterward directed to its occupant, who was stretched out, as they entered, upon an Oriental divan on which twenty persons could have slept.

He took a few steps toward them, bowed, pointed to two seats, and sat down again upon his divan, with one leg bent under him. A book lay at his side, and with his right hand he played with an ivory paper-cutter, the tip of which he looked at from time to time, with one eye only, shutting the other with the habit of the nearsighted.

While the journalist was explaining the object of his visit, and the writer was listening without yet replying, looking fixedly at him, at certain moments,

Patissot, more and more ill at ease, gazed at this celebrity.

Hardly forty years of age, he was of medium stature, rather stout, and of pleasing appearance. His head, like those found in many Italian paintings of the sixteenth century, without being handsome in the sculptor's sense of the word, conveyed an impression that he possessed great power and intelligence. The short hair stood up on the well-developed head, above a thick black mustache; and the whole chin was covered with a beard trimmed close to the skin. The dark glance, often ironical, was penetrating; giving the impression that behind it an active brain was always working, piercing through persons, interpreting words, analyzing gestures, laying bare the heart. That strong, round head was very like his name, quick and short, with two syllables, bounding in the resonance of the two vowels.

When the journalist had made his proposition, the writer answered that he could not make any definite engagement, that he would see about it later; that as yet his plans were not sufficiently decided. Then he was silent. It was a dismissal, and the two men, a little confused, rose. But a desire seized Patissot; he desired that this personage, so well known, should say a word to him, any word whatsoever, which he could repeat to his friends; and summoning up courage, he stammered: "Oh! Monsieur, if you knew how much I appreciate your works!" The other bowed, but did not reply. Patissot became bold. He continued:

"It is a very great honor for me to speak to you to-day."

The writer bowed again, but with a stiff and impatient air. Patissot perceived this, and losing his head, he added:

"What a su-su-su-superb place!"

Then the spirit of the proprietor awaked in the indifferent heart of the man of letters, and smiling, he opened the window to show them the extent of the view.

There was an extensive view in all directions, including Triel, Pisse-Fontaine, Chanteloup, all the heights of Hautrie, and the Seine, as far as the eye could reach.

The two visitors, delighted, congratulated the great writer; and immediately the house was open to them. They saw everything, even to the fine kitchen, the walls of which, inlaid with tiles in blue designs, excited the wonder of the peasants.

"How did you happen to buy this place?" asked the journalist. And the romancer said that, in looking for a house to hire for a summer, he had found the little house, recently built, which was for sale at a few thousand francs, a trifle, almost nothing. He had bought it on the spot.

"But everything you have added must have cost you dear?"

The writer smiled, saying:

"Yes, considerable."

And the two men went away.

The journalist, taking Patissot's arm, philosophized in a slow voice: "Every general has his Waterloo," said he. "Every Balzac has his foible, and every artist residing in the country has a desire to be a landed proprietor."

They took the train at the station of Villaines, and in the car, Patissot mentioned in a loud voice the names of the illustrious painter and famous romancer, as if they were his friends. He even forced himself to believe that he had breakfasted with one and dined with the other.

CHAPTER VI.

Before the Festival

The festival was approaching and the quiverings of it were already running through the streets, as ripples pass over the surface of the water when a storm is rising. The shops, adorned with flags, displayed a gaiety of dyes, and the merchants cheated about the three colors as grocers do over their candles. Hearts were wrought up, little by little. Citizens spoke in the streets, after dinner, about the festival and exchanged ideas regarding it.

"What a festival it will be, my friends, what a festival!"

"You didn't know? All the sovereigns will come incognito, as *bourgeois*, to see it."

"It seems that the Emperor of Russia has arrived; he intends to go everywhere with the Prince of Wales."

"Oh! What a festival it will be!"

It would be a festival, certainly, what Monsieur Patissot called a great occasion; one of those indescribable tumults that for fifteen hours roll from one end of the city to another all the populace, bedizened with tinsel, a wave of perspiring people, where, side by side are tossed the stout gossip with tricolored ribbons, puffing and panting, who has grown stout behind her counter; the rickety employee, towing his wife and brat; the workingman, carrying his youngster astride his neck; the bewildered provincial, with his stupefied, idiotic physiognomy, the lightly-shaved groom still smelling of the stable. And the strangers dressed like monkeys, the English women, like giraffes, the shining-faced water-carrier, and the innumerable phalanx of little *bourgeois*, inoffensive citizens, amused at everything. O topsy-turvyness, back-breaking fatigue, sweat and dust, vociferations, eddies of human flesh, extermination of corns, bewilderment of all thought, frightful odors, breaths of the multitudes, wafts of garlic, give, oh, give to Monsieur Patissot all the joy his heart can contain!

Our worthy friend made his preparations for the festival after reading the proclamation of the mayor on the walls of the district.

This notice ran:

"It is principally to the private decorations that I wish to call your attention. Decorate your homes, illuminate your windows, unite, club together, to give your houses and your streets a more brilliant and more artistic appearance than that of the neighboring houses and streets."

Monsieur Patissot pondered deeply over what artistic appearance he could give his own house.

A serious obstacle presented itself. His only window looked upon a court, a dark court, narrow and deep, where only the rats would see his Venetian lanterns.

He must have a public opening. He found one. On the first floor of his house lived a rich man, a noble and a royalist, whose coachman, also a reactionist, occupied a room on the sixth floor, facing the street. Monsieur Patissot supposed that, for a certain price, any conscience could be bought, and he offered five francs to this wielder of the whip to give up to him his room, from noon to midnight. The offer was accepted at once.

Then he began to busy himself about the decorations. Were three flags and four Chinese lanterns enough to give to this snuffbox an artistic physiognomy and to express all the exaltation of his soul? No, decidedly not! But, in spite of long researches and nocturnal meditations, Monsieur Patissot could not think of anything else. He consulted his neighbors, who were astounded at his inquiry. He questioned his colleagues. Everybody had purchased lanterns and flags, attaching to them tricolored decorations for the day.

Then he began to seek for an original idea. He haunted *cafés*, approaching the customers, but they were lacking in imagination. Then one morning he climbed to the top of an omnibus. A gentleman of respectable aspect was smoking a cigar at his side; a workingman further off puffed at his reversed pipe; two street-boys were near the coachman; and employees of all sorts were going to business for the price of three sous.

Before the shops bundles of flags were resplendent under the rising sun. Patissot turned toward his neighbor.

"This will be a fine festival," said he. The gentleman gave a side glance and replied with an arrogant air: "It's all the same to me!"

"You are not going to take part in it?" Patissot asked, surprised.

The other disdainfully shook his head.

"They make me sick with their festival! What is it the festival of? The government? I don't recognize this government, Monsieur."

But Patissot, himself an employee of the government, sternly answered:

"The government, Monsieur, is the Republic."

His neighbor was not disconcerted, and, quietly putting his hands into his pockets, replied:

"Well, what of it? I don't object. Republic or anything else, I don't care about it. What I want, Monsieur, is to know my government. I have seen Charles X. and I stood by him; I have seen Louis Philippe and I stood by him; I have seen Napoleon III., and I stood by him; but I have never seen the Republic."

Patissot, still serious, replied:

"It is represented by its President."

"Well, let them show him to me," the other grunted.

Patissot shrugged his shoulders.

"Everybody can see him—he is not concealed in a wardrobe."

But suddenly the stout man grew angry:

"Pardon me, Monsieur, he cannot be seen. I

have tried more than a hundred times, Monsieur. I have posted myself near the Elysée; he did not come out. A passer-by told me that he was playing billiards in the *café* opposite. I went into the *café* opposite. He was not there. They promised me that he would go to Melan for the meeting. I went to Melan and I did not see him. I got tired finally. I have never seen Gambetta, either, and I don't know a single deputy."

He became excited.

"A government, Monsieur, ought to show itself. It is made for that, for nothing else. People ought to know that on a certain day, at a certain hour, the government will pass through a certain street. In that way people can see it and be satisfied."

Patissot, quieted, rather liked these statements.

"It is true," said he, "that people would prefer to know those who govern them."

The gentleman replied in a softer tone:

"Do you know how I should manage the festival myself? Well, Monsieur, I should have a procession with gilded cars, like the sacred chariots of kings, and I should take the members of the government, from the President down to the deputies, through Paris in them, all day long. In that way everybody would know by sight at least, the persons of the State."

But one of the street-boys near the coachman turned around, saying:

"And the fat ox, where would you put him?"

A laugh ran through the two benches. Patissot understood the objection, and murmured:

"That, perhaps, would not be dignified."

The gentleman, after reflecting, agreed.

"Well, then," said he, "I should place them on view somewhere so that everybody could see them without putting themselves out; on the Triumphal Arc de l'Etoile, for instance, and I should make the whole population file before them. That would lend great character to the event."

But the boy again turned around and asked:

"Would it need a telescope to see their faces?"

The gentleman did not reply; he continued:

"It is like the distribution of flags! There ought to be some pretext, some organization, perhaps a little war; and then the standards could be presented to the troops as a recompense. I had an idea of which I wrote to the minister; but he has not deigned to reply to me. As they have chosen the date of the taking of the Bastile, an imitation of that might be made; they ought to have built a Bastile in cardboard, painted by a scene-painter, and concealing the whole Column of July within the walls. Then, Monsieur, the troop should make an assault and capture the citadel. That would have been a fine spectacle, and a lesson at the same time, to see the army itself overthrow the ramparts of tyranny. Then they ought to set the sham Bastile on fire; and amid the flames should appear the column, with the Genius of Liberty, symbol of a new order and of the freedom of the people."

Everybody on the omnibus top listened this time, finding these ideas excellent. An old man said:

"That is a great thought, Monsieur, and one which does you honor. It is to be regretted that the government has not adopted it."

A young man declared that they ought to have the poems of Barbier recited by actors in the streets, to teach the people art and liberty simultaneously.

This proposition excited great enthusiasm. Everybody wished to talk; their brains were exalted. A street-organ passing by droned out a bar of the "Marseillaise"; a workingman chanted the words, and everyone in chorus shouted the refrain. The lofty nature of the song and its stirring rhythm fired the coachman, whose flogged horses were galloping. Monsieur Patissot bawled at the top of his lungs, slapping his thighs, and the inside passengers, terrified, wondered what kind of tempest had burst over their heads.

They stopped singing after a time, and Monsieur Patissot, judging his neighbor to be a man well able to take the initiative, consulted him on the preparations which he expected to make.

"Lanterns and flags are all very well," said Patissot, "but I would like something better."

The other reflected a long time, but found nothing to suggest. So Monsieur Patissot, in despair of finding any novelty, bought three flags and four lanterns.

CHAPTER VII.

A Sad Story

To recover from the fatigues of the celebration, Monsieur Patissot conceived the plan of passing the following Sunday tranquilly ensconced somewhere in communication with nature.

Desiring a fine view, he chose the terrace of Saint-Germain. He set out after breakfast and, when he had visited the museum of prehistoric curiosities,—as a matter of duty, for he understood nothing about them,—he stood struck with admiration before that great promenade, from which in the distance are seen Paris, the surrounding region, all the plains, villages, woods, ponds, towns even, and that great bluish serpent with innumerable undulations, that gentle and adorable river which touches the heel of France—the Seine!

In the background, made blue by light mists, he distinguished, at an incredible distance, little places like white spots, on the slopes of the green hills. And musing that on these almost invisible points

men like himself lived, suffered, and toiled, he reflected for the first time on the smallness of the world. He said to himself that, in space, other points still more imperceptible, systems greater than our world, perhaps, bear races more nearly perfect. But a vertigo seized him at the extent of the possibility, and he stopped thinking of these things, as they bothered his head. Then he followed the terrace at a slow pace, through its whole breadth, a little wearied, as if fatigued by too heavy reflections.

When he reached the end, he sat down on a bench. A gentleman happened to be there with his hands crossed over his cane and his chin resting on his hands, in an attitude of profound meditation. But Patissot belonged to the race of those who cannot pass three seconds at the side of a fellow-being without speaking to him. He first looked at his neighbor, hemmed, then suddenly said:

"Could you tell me, Monsieur, the name of the village that I see down there?"

The gentleman raised his head and in a sad voice replied:

"It is Sartreville."

Then he was silent. Patissot, contemplating the immense perspective of the terrace, shaded with trees a century old, feeling in his lungs the great breath of the forest which rustled behind him, rejoiced by the springtime odors of the woods and great fields, gave an abrupt little laugh and, with a keen eye, remarked:

"There are some fine nooks for lovers here."

His neighbor turned toward him with a disconsolate air and replied:

"If I were in love, Monsieur, I would throw myself into the river."

Patissot not being of the same mind, protested.

"Hey! hey! you speak of it with great unconcern; and why so?"

"Because it has already cost me too dear for me to wish to begin it again."

Patissot gave a grin of joy as he replied:

"Well, if you have been guilty of follies, they always cost dear."

But the other sighed in a melancholy way, and said sadly:

"No, Monsieur, I have not perpetrated any follies; I have been betrayed by events, that is all."

Patissot, who scented a good story, continued:

"For all that, we cannot dislike the curés; it is not in nature."

Then the man lifted his eyes sorrowfully to heaven.

"That is true, Monsieur, but if the priests were men like others, my misfortune would not have happened. I am an enemy to ecclesiastical celibacy, Monsieur, and I have my reasons for it."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask you?"

"Not at all. This is my story: I am a Norman, Monsieur. My father was a miller at Darnétal, near Rouen; and when he died we were left mere children, my brother and I, in the charge of our uncle, a good stout curé of Caux.

"He brought us up, gave us our education; and then sent us both to Paris to find suitable situations.

"My brother was twenty-one years old and I was twenty-two.

"We lodged together from economy, and we were living quietly when the adventure occurred which I am going to tell you.

"One evening as I was going home, I happened to meet on the sidewalk a young lady who pleased me very much. She answered to all my tastes; she was rather tall, Monsieur, and had a pleasant air. I dared not speak to her, of course, but I gave her a penetrating glance. The next morning I found her at the same place; then, as I was timid, I only bowed. She replied with a little smile, and the day after I approached her and spoke to her.

"Her name was Victorine, and she worked at sewing in a dressmaker's establishment. I felt very soon that my heart was taken.

"I said to her: 'Mademoiselle, it seems to me that I cannot live away from you.' She lowered her eyes without answering. Then I seized her hand and I felt her press mine in return. I was captured, Monsieur: but I did not know what to do on account of my brother. My faith! I was just deciding to tell him everything when he opened his mouth first: He also was in love. Then it was agreed that we should take another lodging, but that we should not breathe a word of it to our good uncle, who should keep on addressing his letters in care of my domestic. So it was done; and a week later Victorine joined me in my home. We gave a little dinner, to which my brother brought his sweetheart, and in the evening, when everything was put in order, we definitely took possession of our lodging.

"We had been asleep for an hour, perhaps, when a violent ringing of the bell awaked me. I looked at

the clock, it was three in the morning. I slipped on my trousers and hurried toward the door, saying to myself, 'it is some misfortune, surely—'

"It was my uncle, Monsieur, he had on his traveling coat, and carried his valise in his hand.

"'Yes, it is I, my boy, I have come to surprise you, and to spend several days in Paris. Monseigneur has given me leave of absence.'

"He kissed me on both cheeks, entered, and shut the door. I was more dead than alive, Monsieur. But as he was about to penetrate into my bedroom, I almost grasped him by the collar.

"'No, not that way, uncle, this way, this way.'

"And I made him go into the dining-room. You see my situation—what was I to do? He said to me:

"'And your brother, is he asleep? Go and wake him up.'

"I stammered:

"'No, uncle, he has been obliged to pass the night at the office for an urgent order.'

"My uncle rubbed his hands.

"'Business is all right, then?'

"An idea occurred to me.

"'You must be hungry, uncle, after your journey.'

"'My faith! that's true, I could nibble a little crust.'

"I rushed to the cupboard, where I had put the remains of the dinner. He was a great eater, my uncle, a true Norman curé, capable of eating twelve hours at a sitting. I brought out a bit of beef, to make the time longer, for I knew that he did not care for it; then after he had eaten enough of it, I

presented the remnant of a chicken, a paté almost whole, a potato salad, three pots of cream, and some good wine that I had laid aside for the next day.

"Ah, Monsieur, how he did gorge!

"'For heaven's sake!' said I to myself, 'what a storeroom!' And I stuffed him, Monsieur, I stuffed him. He did not resist, either.

"When he had devoured everything, it was five in the morning. I was on pins and needles. I drew him along another hour still, with the coffee and all the rinsings; but finally he rose.

"'Let me see your lodging,' said he.

"I was lost, and I followed, thinking of throwing myself out of the window. As I entered the bedroom ready to faint, waiting for something to occur, a last hope made my heart leap.

"The brave girl had closed the bed-curtains. Ah, if he only should not open them! But alas! Monsieur, he approached the bed immediately, with a candle in his hand, and suddenly he raised the curtains of the bed. It was warm, we had drawn down the bedclothes, and there was left only the sheet, which she had pulled up over her head; but her outlines, Monsieur, her outlines could be seen! I trembled in all my limbs, with my throat compressed, choking. Then my uncle turned toward me, laughing heartily, so that I almost jumped to the ceiling from astonishment.

"'Ah! you joker, you did not want to wake up your brother. Well, you'll see how I shall awake him.'

"And I saw his peasant's hand rising; and while he was choking with laughter, his hand fell like a

thunderbolt on—on—well—on the outlines that could be seen, Monsieur.

"There was a terrible cry in the bed; and then something like a tempest under the sheet. The form moved. She could not disentangle herself. Finally, almost at one jump, she appeared, with eyes like lanterns, and she stared at my uncle, who backed out, his mouth gaping, and puffing, Monsieur, as if he were going to be ill!

"Then I lost my head and fled. I wandered about for six days not daring to go back to my quarters. Finally, when I did pluck up courage to return, nobody was there."

Patissot, shaking with laughter, said: "I should think not!" which made his neighbor stop talking.

But in a second, the man resumed:

"I never saw my uncle again. He disinherited me, persuaded that I took advantage of the absence of my brother to play my tricks.

"I never saw Victorine again, either. All my family turned their backs upon me; and my brother himself, who had profited by the situation, as he inherited one hundred thousand francs at the death of my uncle, seems to consider me an old libertine. And yet, Monsieur, I swear to you that never since that moment, never, never!— There are, you see, minutes that a man never forgets."

"And what are you doing here?" asked Patissot.

The other swept the horizon with a glance, as if he feared to be overheard by some unseen ear; then he murmured, with a sound of terror in his voice:

"I am flying from the women, Monsieur!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A Trial of Love

Many poets think that nature is not complete without woman, and from that idea, without doubt, came all the flowery comparisons in their songs, which make in turn of our natural companion a rose, a violet, a tulip, and other charming objects.

The need of tenderness that overcomes us at the hour of twilight, when the mist of evening begins to float over the hillsides, and when all the perfumes of the earth intoxicate us, overflows into lyric invocations; and Monsieur Patissot, like others, was seized with a longing for tenderness, for soft kisses, given along paths where the sunshine falls, with hands clasped, and plump figures pliant to his embrace.

He began by regarding love as a delectation without limits, and in his hours of reverie, he thanked the great Unknown for placing so much charm in the caresses of humanity. He felt that he must have a companion, but did not know where to find her.

Upon the advice of a friend, he went to the Folies-Bergères. He saw a complete assortment there, and became greatly perplexed to choose between them, for the desires of his heart sprang, above all, from poetic impulses, and a love of poetic things did not seem exactly the principal attribute of the young ladies with blackened eyelashes who cast disturbing smiles at him, showing the enamel of their false teeth.

Finally his choice rested upon a young *débutante,* who appeared poor and timid, and whose unhappy look seemed to announce a nature that might be easily poetized.

He agreed to meet her on the following day at the Saint-Lazare station.

She did not keep the appointment, but she had the grace to send a friend in her stead.

The friend was a tall, red-haired girl, dressed patriotically in three colors, and covered with an immense tunnel-hat, of which her head occupied the center. Monsieur Patissot was a little disappointed, but courteously accepted the substitute. And they started for Maisons-Laffitte, where regattas and a grand Venetian festival had been announced.

As soon as they were in the car, already occupied by two gentlemen who wore decorations, and their ladies, who must at least have been marquises, so dignified did they appear, the tall, red-haired girl, who answered to the name of Octavie, announced to Patissot, with the voice of a parrot, that she was a very good girl, fond of joking, and that she adored the country because one could pluck flowers and eat fried fish there. She laughed with a shrillness that

threatened to break the windows, calling her companion, familiarly, "My big wolf."

A sense of shame came over Patissot, upon whom his title of government employee imposed a certain reserve. After a time, however, Octavie became silent, looking sidewise at her neighbors, and felt herself seized with the strong desire that haunts all women of a certain class to make the acquaintance of respectable women. At the end of five minutes she thought she had hit upon a capital plan, and, drawing a copy of the "Gil-Blas" from her pocket, she offered it to one of the ladies, who was astonished at her freedom, and refused the journal with a shake of her head. Then the tall, red-haired girl, hurt, began a tirade of words of a double meaning, speaking of women who play their own games without being any better than certain other women; and at times she said things so broad that they had the effect of a bomb bursting amid the glacial dignity of the travelers.

Finally they arrived at their destination. Patissot at once wished to seek the shady corners of the park, hoping that the melancholy of the forest would quiet the irritated feelings of his companion. But quite another effect was produced than that which he hoped. As soon as she was among the leaves and saw the grass, she began to sing at the top of her lungs, bits of operas that remained in her giddy pate, trilling and warbling, passing from "Robert le Diable" to "Musette," fancying above all a sentimental song whose stanzas she sang with a sound as piercing as a gimlet.

Suddenly she announced that she was hungry and

wished to return. Patissot, who was awaiting the hoped-for tenderness, tried in vain to detain her. Then she grew angry.

"I did not come here to bore myself, did I?" she snapped.

And he had to seek the Petit-Havre restaurant, near the place where the regattas were about to be held.

She ordered a tremendous breakfast, with a succession of dishes enough to feed a regiment. Then, not being able to wait while they were prepared, she demanded the relishes. A box of sardines was brought. She attacked it as if she were about to eat the tin box itself; but after she had consumed two or three of the little oily fish, she declared that she was no longer hungry, and desired to go to see the preparations for the regatta.

Patissot, in despair, and seized with hunger in his turn, absolutely refused to budge. She went away alone, promising to return for the dessert, and he began to eat by himself, not knowing how to bring this rebellious nature to the idealization of his dream.

As she did not return, he went to search for her. She had met some friends, a band of boating men, half naked, red to the tips of their ears, and gesticulating, who were settling in shouts all the details of the race, in front of the house of the Constructor Fournaise.

Two gentlemen of respectable aspect, doubtless judges, listened attentively to them. As soon as she perceived Patissot, Octavie, hanging on the tanned arm of a tall devil, who certainly possessed more biceps than brains, whispered a few words in his ear.

The other answered:

"Agreed."

And she went back quite joyfully to her former escort, with a lively and almost caressing expression.

"I want to go out in a boat," said she.

Happy to see her in so charming a mood, he consented to this new desire, and engaged a craft.

But she obstinately refused to view the regattas, in spite of Patissot's wish.

"I would rather be alone with you, my wolf," said she.

His heart trembled. At last!

He took off his frock-coat and began to ply the oars furiously.

A monumental old mill, whose worm-eaten arms hung over the water, bestrode with its two arches a little inlet of the river. They passed swiftly beneath, and when they were on the other side they perceived in front of them an adorable bit of river, shaded by great trees that formed a sort of vault above. The little inlet wound, turned, and zigzagged to the left and to the right, continually revealing new horizons, large meadows on one side, and on the other a hillside all covered with chalets. They passed in front of a bathing establishment, almost buried in verdure, a charming rural nook, where gentlemen in fresh gloves, with ladies wreathed in flowers, displayed all the awkwardness of elegant folk in the country.

She uttered a cry of joy:

"We'll have a bath there, presently."

Then, further on in a sort of bay, she wished to stop.

"Come here, big one, near to me," she said, coaxingly.

She put her arm around his neck, and with her head resting on his shoulder, she murmured:

"How happy I am! how delightful it is on the water!"

Patissot, in a word, was swimming in happiness; and he thought of those stupid boating men, who, without ever feeling the penetrating charm of the shores and the frail grace of the rose-trees, always go about panting, sweating, and brutalized by exercise, from the tavern where they breakfast to the tavern where they dine.

After a time the soothing influences about him sent him to sleep. When he awaked he was all alone! He called at first; nobody answered. Feeling very anxious, he climbed up the bank, fearing lest some misfortune had happened.

Then, far in the distance and coming toward him, he saw a long, slender wherry, which appeared to fly like an arrow. It was rowed by four oarsmen black as negroes with the sun. They appeared to be skimming over the water; a woman held the tiller. Heavens! It seemed— It was she! To regulate the playing of the oars, she was singing in her shrill voice a boating song, which she interrupted a moment when they came in front of Patissot. Then, throwing him a kiss, she shouted to him:

"Get along, you big canary!'

CHAPTER IX.

A Dinner and Some Ideas

On the occasion of the national celebration, Monsieur Antoine Perdrix, head of Monsieur Patissot's bureau, was made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. He had been in the service thirty years under preceding governments and ten years under the present. His employees, although they murmured a little at being thus rewarded in the person of their chief, judged it proper to offer him a cross adorned with paste diamonds; and the new Chevalier, not wishing to be behind, invited them all to a dinner for the following Sunday at his place at Asnières.

The house, decorated with Moorish ornaments, had the effect of a *café* concert-hall, but its location gave it great value because the line of the railway, skirting the garden for its whole length, passed within twenty meters of the steps.

Within the circle of incumbent turf stood a basin of Roman cement containing goldfish, and a fountain

of water, with a stream not much larger than that of a syringe, at times threw into the air microscopic rainbows at which visitors marveled.

The feeding of this irrigator was the constant occupation of Monsieur Perdrix, who frequently rose at five o'clock in the morning in order to fill the reservoir. In his shirt-sleeves, his big stomach protruding, he pumped with desperation, so that on his return from the office he might have the satisfaction of seeing the fountain play, and imagining that a coolness and freshness spread from it over the garden.

On the evening of the official dinner, all the guests, one after the other, went into ecstasies over the situation of the domain, and every time they heard a train coming in the distance, Monsieur Perdrix announced its destination to them: Saint-Germain, Havre, Cherbourg, or Dieppe, and they made playful signs to travelers who were looking out of the car-windows.

The entire office staff arrived first. There was Monsieur Capitaine, subchief; Monsieur Patissot, chief clerk: then Messieurs de Sombreterre and Vallin, elegant young employees, who came to the office only at their own hours; finally Monsieur Rade, celebrated throughout the whole ministry for the absurd doctrines he upheld; and the copying clerk, Monsieur Boivin.

Monsieur Rade passed for a type. Some persons treated him as a fanatic or an idealist, others as a revolutionist. All agreed that he was an awkward fellow. Already old, thin and small, with a lively eye and long thin locks, he had all his life professed the most profound contempt for the administrative duties.

He was a rummager of books and a great reader, with a nature always revolting against everything, a seeker of truth and despiser of popular prejudices. He had a neat and paradoxical fashion of expressing his opinions which closed the mouths of self-satisfied imbeciles and of those who were discontented without knowing why. People said: "That old fool, Rade," or perhaps, "That harebrained Rade," and the slowness of his advancement seemed to bear out the successful mediocrities charged against him. The independence of his speech often made his colleagues tremble, and they sometimes wondered how he had been able to keep his place. As soon as they were at table, Monsieur Perdrix, in a well-turned little speech, thanked his "collaborators," promised them his protection, the more efficacious as his power increased, and finished with an emotional peroration in which he thanked and glorified the liberal and just government that knew how to seek merit among the humble.

Monsieur Capitaine, subchief, replied in the name of the bureau, felicitated, congratulated, greeted, exalted, sang the praises of everybody; and frantic applause followed these two morsels of eloquence. After this the guests applied themselves seriously to eating.

All went well throughout the dinner, the poverty of the conversation not worrying anybody. But at the dessert a discussion arose suddenly, whereupon Monsieur Rade let himself loose, and began to pass the limits of discretion in his speech.

They were speaking of love naturally, and, a breath of chivalry intoxicating this roomful of bureau-

crats, they were praising with exaltation the superior beauty of woman, her delicacy of soul, her aptitude for exquisite things, the correctness of her judgment, and the refinement of her sentiments. Monsieur Rade began to protest energetically, refusing to the so-called fair sex all the qualities attributed to it; and then in the presence of the general indignation, he quoted some authors.

"Schopenhauer, Messieurs, Schopenhauer, a great philosopher whom Germany venerates. This is what he says: 'The intelligence of man must have been very much obscured by love to make him call beautiful that short-figured sex with narrow shoulders, large hips, and crooked legs. Its whole beauty, really, rests in the instinct of love. Instead of calling it the fair sex, it would have been more correct to call it the unæsthetic sex. Women have neither the sentiment nor the intelligence of music, any more than of poetry or of the plastic arts; among them there is only pure mimicry, pure pretense, pure affectation, cultivated from their desire to please.'"

"The man that said that is an imbecile!" declared Monsieur de Sombreterre.

Monsieur Rade, smiling, continued: "And Rousseau, Messieurs? Here is his opinion: 'Women in general love no art, are skilled in none, and have no genius.'"

Monsieur de Sombreterre disdainfully shrugged his shoulders.

"Rousseau is as stupid as the other one, that's all," said he.

Monsieur Rade, still smiling, rejoined: "And Lord Byron, who nevertheless loved women, said

this: 'They ought to be well fed and well clad, but they ought not to mingle in society. They should also be instructed in religion, but should be unacquainted with poetry and politics, and read only books of piety and cooking.' You see, Messieurs," continued Monsieur Rade, "they all study painting and music, and yet there is not one of them who has painted a good picture, or composed a remarkable opera! Why, Messieurs? Simply because they are the *sexus sequior*, the second sex in all respects, made to be kept apart, and on the second plane."

Monsieur Patissot grew angry.

"And Madame Sand, Monsieur?"

"An exception, Monsieur, an exception. I will quote to you still another passage, from the great English philosopher, Herbert Spencer. Here it is: 'Each sex is capable, under the influence of special stimulants, of manifesting the faculties ordinarily reserved for the other. Thus, to take an extreme case, a special excitation may cause the breasts of men to give milk; in time of famine little children deprived of their mother have been known to be saved in this way. Nevertheless, we shall not place this faculty of giving milk among the attributes of the male. So, also, the feminine intelligence, which in certain cases will give superior products, should not be considered in an estimate of the feminine nature as a social factor.'"

Monsieur Patissot, wounded in all his natively chivalric instincts, declared:

"You are not a Frenchman, Monsieur. French gallantry is one of the forms of patriotism."

Monsieur Rade retorted: "I have very little patriotism, Monsieur, the least possible."

At this a coolness spread throughout the company, but he tranquilly continued:

"Admit with me that war is a monstrous thing; that this custom of official slaughtering of the people constitutes a permanent state of savagery. It is odious, since the only real good is life, to see the government, whose duty it is to protect the existence of its subjects, persistently seeking methods to destroy them. That is so, isn't it? And, if war is a terrible thing is not patriotism also, since it is the mother idea which supports it? When an assassin kills, he has usually some design, that of robbing; but when a brave man with a bayonet-thrust kills another honest man, the father of a family, or a great artist. perhaps, what thought does he obey?"

Everyone felt deeply hurt.

"When a man thinks of such things he does not often mention them in society," added Monsieur Rade.

Monsieur Patissot rejoined: "There are nevertheless, Monsieur, certain principles that all honest men recognize."

"What are they?" asked Monsieur Rade.

"Morality, Monsieur," solemnly replied Monsieur Patissot.

Monsieur Rade beamed.

"Let me give you a single example," he said, "one little example, Monsieur. What opinion have you of certain men who live at the expense of women? Well, only a hundred years ago it was considered quite the thing to live at a woman's ex-

pense, and even to devour her whole property. So you see that the principles of morality are not fixed, and thus—"

Monsieur Perdrix, visibly embarrassed, stopped him.

"You would sap the foundation of society, Monsieur Rade. There must always be moral principles as public safeguards. Thus in politics, Monsieur de Sombreterre is Legitimist, Monsieur Vallin, Orléanist, Monsieur Patissot and I are Republicans, we all have very different principles, and yet we get along very well, because we have principles of some kind."

But Monsieur Rade cried: "I have principles too, Messieurs—very decided ones."

Monsieur Patissot raised his head and coldly replied:

"I should be happy to hear them, Monsieur."

Monsieur Rade did not wait to be urged.

"Here they are, Monsieur: First principle—that government by one man is a monstrosity. Second principle—Restricted suffrage is an injustice. Third principle—Universal suffrage is a piece of stupidity. To deliver up millions of men, choice minds, learned men, geniuses even, to the caprice or will of a being who, in a moment of gaiety, madness, intoxication, or love, will not hesitate to sacrifice everything for his excited fancy, will squander the riches of the country, painfully gathered by all, will cut to pieces thousands of men on battlefields, seems to me, a mere logician, to be a monstrous aberration.

"But, admitting that a country ought to govern itself, to exclude from suffrage, under some always debatable pretext, a part of the citizens, is an injus-

tice so flagrant that it seems to me useless to discuss it further.

"There remains universal suffrage. You will admit with me that men of genius are rare, will you not? To be generous, let us agree that there are five in France to-day. Let us add, still to be within our estimate, two hundred men of great talent, a thousand others possessing various talents, and two thousand men who are superior in some way. There you have a staff of three thousand two hundred and five minds. After which you have the army of mediocrities, followed by the multitudes of imbeciles. As the mediocrities and the imbeciles always form the immense majority, it is inadmissible that they can erect an intelligent government.

"To be just, I will add that, logically, universal suffrage seems to me the only admissible principle, but I assert that it is inapplicable and I will show you the reason why.

"To make all the living forces of a country cooperate in the government, to represent all interests, and conserve all rights, is an ideal dream, but not practical, because the only force that can be measured is just that which ought to be most neglected, —the brute force of numbers. According to your method, unintelligent numbers lead genius, learning, all the acquired knowledge, wealth, and industry. When you are able to give to a member of the Institute ten thousand votes against a ragman's one vote, a hundred votes to a great landed proprietor, against ten to his farmer, you will have nearly established an equilibrium between the forces and obtained a national representation that will truly

represent all the powers of the nation. But I defy you to do it.

"Here are my conclusions: Formerly when a man could not succeed at anything else, he became a photographer; now he becomes a deputy. A power thus composed will always be lamentably incapable, but incapable of doing evil as well as incapable of doing good. A despot, on the contrary, if he is stupid, may do much evil, and if he is intelligent, which very rarely happens, he may accomplish much good.

"Between these forms of government I do not pretend to decide; and I declare myself an anarchist, —I mean a partisan of the power the most effaced, the most imperceptible, yet the most liberal, in the widest sense of the word, and revolutionary at the same time; that is to say, revolutionary against its eternal enemy, which can be nothing but absolutely defective, under present conditions."

Cries of indignation rose about the table, and all the guests — Legitimists, Orléanists, and Republicans — grew red with anger. Monsieur Patissot especially, was choking with rage, and turning toward Monsieur Rade, he said:

"Then, Monsieur, you don't believe in anything."

"No, Monsieur," the other replied, simply.

The anger roused in all the guests at this reply, prevented Monsieur Rade from continuing, and Monsieur Perdrix, reassuming his prerogative as chief, closed the discussion.

"Enough, Messieurs, —we each have our opinions and we are not likely to change them," he said, with dignity.

The first statement was approved, but Monsieur Rade, always in revolt, was determined to have the last word.

"I have a moral principle, nevertheless," said he. "It may be formulated in a phrase: 'Never do anything to another, which you would not have him do to you.' I defy you to find fault with that, while in three discussions I will undertake to demolish the most sacred of your principles."

This time nobody answered. But as they were going home in the evening, two by two, each man said to his companion: "Truly, Monsieur Rade goes much too far. His head certainly is affected. He ought to be appointed chief of the Charenton Asylum!"

CHAPTER X.

A Public Meeting

At each side of a door, above which, in staring letters, appeared the word "Ball," large posters of a flaring red announced that on this Sunday this place of popular amusement would be devoted to another purpose.

Monsieur Patissot, sauntering about like a good *bourgeois* while digesting his dinner, and strolling leisurely toward the station, stopped, his attention being attracted by this bit of scarlet color, and he read as follows:

"General International Association for the Vindication of the Rights of Women. Central Committee sitting at Paris.

"Great Public Meeting.

"Under the presidency of the free-thinking citizeness, Zoé Lamour, and of the Russian nihilist citizeness, Eva Schourine, with the assistance of a delegation of citizenesses of the free circle of Independent Thought, and of a group of citizen adherents, Citizeness Césarine Brau and Citizen Sapience Cornut, returned from exile, will speak.

"Price of admission, one franc."

An old woman wearing spectacles, seated at a table covered with a cloth, took the money.

Monsieur Patissot entered.

In the hall, already nearly full, floated an odor like that of a wet dog, mingled with the suspicious perfumes of public balls.

Monsieur Patissot, looking about, found a seat in the second row beside a little woman, dressed like a working-girl, with an exalted expression, but having a swelling on one cheek.

The whole staff was present. Citizeness Zoé Lamour, a good-looking, stout, dark woman, wearing red flowers in her black hair, shared the presidency with a thin little Russian nihilist citizeness, Eva Schourine.

Just below them, illustrious citizeness Césarine Brau, called the "down-caster of men," a pretty woman also, was seated at the side of citizen Sapience Cornut, returned from exile. The latter was a solid old man with flowing locks and a ferocious appearance, who gazed about the hall as a cat looks at a flock of birds, his closed fists resting on his knees.

On the right, a delegation of antique citizenesses, severed from their husbands, dried up in celibacy and exasperated with waiting, sat opposite a group of citizen "reformers of humanity," who had never cut their beards nor their hair, no doubt to indicate the infinitude of their aspirations.

The general public was scattered throughout the hall. It was a mixed gathering.

Women were in the majority, belonging to the rank of *concierges* and of shopkeepers who close their shops on Sunday. The type of inconsolable old maid appeared everywhere, between the red faces of the women of the *bourgeois*.

Three college students were whispering in a corner, having come there to be among a crowd of women. A few families had entered the place out of curiosity.

In the front row a negro, clad in yellow ticking, curly-haired and magnificent, stared at the presiding officers, and grinned from ear to ear with a silent, restrained laugh, that showed his white teeth gleaming out his black face. He laughed without a movement of the body, like a man who was delighted, transported with joy. Why was he there? Mystery. Had he thought he was coming to a show? Or did he say to himself, in his woolly African pate: "Truly, they are very funny, these jokers; we don't find anything like that under the equator."

Citizeness Zoé Lamour opened the meeting with a little speech.

She recalled the servitude of woman since the beginning of the world; her obscure, but always heroic position, her constant devotion to all great ideas. She compared her to the people of other times, the people of kings, and of the aristocrats, calling her the eternal martyr for whom every man is a master; and in a great lyric outburst she cried: "The people had its 'eighty-nine—let us have ours! Oppressed man made *his* Revolution; the captive broke his chain, the outraged slave revolted! Women! let us imitate our despots! Let us revolt! Let us break the ancient chain of marriage and of servitude; let us march to the conquest of our rights, let us, also, make *our* revolution!"

She sat down amid thunders of applause; and the negro, wild with joy, knocked his head against his knees, uttering shrill cries.

The Russian nihilist citizeness, Eva Schourine, arose, and, in a piercing and ferocious voice, said:

"I am a Russian. I have raised the standard of revolt; this hand of mine has struck the oppressors of my country, and I declare to you, French women now listening to me, I am ready, under all skies, in all parts of the universe, to strike at the tyranny of man, to avenge everywhere women who are so odiously oppressed!"

A great tumult of approbation rose, and citizen Sapience Cornut, himself, standing up, gallantly rubbed his tawny beard against this avenging hand.

Then the ceremonies took on a truly international character. The citizenesses delegated by foreign powers arose, one after another, offering the adhesion of their respective countries. A German woman spoke first. Obese, with a growth of tow hair on her head, she sputtered in a thick voice, and with an atrocious accent:

"I want to tell you all the joy that filled the daughter of Germany when she heard of the great movement of the Parisian women."

An Italian woman, a Spanish woman, and a Swedish woman each said almost the same thing in queer dialects, and finally, an inordinately tall English woman, whose teeth resembled garden implements, expressed herself in these terms:

"I also wish to assure you of the support of the women of Free England offered to the picturesque feminine population of France, for the final and entire emancipation of the female sex! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

At this the negro began to utter cries of such enthusiasm, with such immoderate gestures of delight,

throwing his legs over the back of the seats and slapping his legs with fury, that the two custodians of the meeting were obliged to calm him.

Patissot's neighbor murmured: "Hysterical women! All hysterical women!"

Patissot thinking that he was addressed, replied: "What is it?"

The gentleman made excuses. "Pardon me, I was not speaking to you. I simply said that all these women are hysterical."

Monsieur Patissot, prodigiously surprised, inquired: "You know them, then?"

"Well, rather, Monsieur. Zoé Lamour took her novitiate to become a nun. That's one. Eva Schourine has been punished as an incendiary, and decided to be crazy. That's two. Césarine Brau is a mere intriguer, who wishes to get herself spoken of. I see three others there who passed through my hands at the hospital of X——. As for all the old jail-birds who surround us, I need not speak of them."

A loud "hush!" came from all sides. Citizen Sapience Cornut, returned from exile, arose. He first rolled his terrible eyes, then, in a hollow voice that sounded like the roaring of the wind in a cavern, he began:

"There are words as great as principles, luminous as suns, resounding as bursts of thunder: Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! They are the banners of the people; under their folds we bravely marched to the assault of tyrannies. It is your turn, O women! to brandish them as weapons, to march to the conquest of independence. Be free, free in love, in the home, in the fatherland. Become our equals at the hearth,

our equals in the street, our equals especially in politics and before the law. Fraternity! Be our sisters, the confidants of our grand projects, our valiant companions. Become truly a half of humanity, instead of being only a small part of it."

And he plunged into transcendental politics, developing plans as large as the world, speaking of the soul of society, predicting the Universal Republic built upon these three indestructible bases: Liberty, equality, fraternity.

When he ceased talking the hall was almost shaken down with the salvos of applause. Monsieur Patissot, amazed, turned toward his neighbor, asking:

"Isn't he a little crazy?"

The old gentleman replied: "No, Monsieur, there are millions like him. It is a result of education."

Patissot did not understand.

"Of education?" he asked.

"Yes, now that they know how to read and to write, their latent foolishness comes out."

"Then, Monsieur, you believe that education—"

"Pardon, Monsieur, I am a Liberal. I only mean to say this: You have a watch, haven't you? Well, break a spring and take it to this citizen Cornut, begging him to mend it. He will answer you, with an oath, that he is not a watchmaker. But if there is anything wrong in that infinitely complicated machine known as France, he believes himself the most capable of men to repair it at a sitting. And forty thousand brawlers of his kind think the same and proclaim it without ceasing. I say, Monsieur, that we lack here new governing classes; that, as men born of fathers having held power, brought up in that idea,

especially educated for that purpose,—just as young men are taught who are intended for the Polytechnic—"

Numerous cries of "Hush!" interrupted him again. A young man with a melancholy air took the platform.

He began: "Mesdames, I have asked to be permitted to speak in order to combat your theories. To demand for women civil rights, equal to those exercised by men, is equivalent to demanding the end of your power. The exterior aspect alone of women reveals that she is not destined for hard physical labor nor prolonged intellectual efforts. Her sphere is another, but not less beautiful one. She puts poetry into life. By the power of her grace, the glance of her eye, the charm of her smile, she dominates man, who dominates the world. Man has strength, which you cannot take from him; but you have seductiveness, which captivates his strength. Of what do you complain? Since the world began, you have been queens and rulers. Nothing is done without you. It is for you that all fine works are accomplished.

"But the day on which you become our equals, civilly and politically, you will become our rivals. Take care, then, that the charm that constitutes your whole strength shall not be broken. For then, as we are incontestably the more vigorous and the better equipped for the sciences and the arts, your inferiority will appear, and you will become truly oppressed.

"You have a fine rôle to play, Mesdames, since for us you represent the whole seductiveness of life, the illimitable illusion, the eternal reward of our

efforts. Do not seek to change this. Besides, you will never succeed in doing so."

Hisses interrupted him, and he stepped down.

Patissot's neighbor, arising, remarked:

"A little romantic, that young man, but with good sense for all that. Will you come and have a bock, Monsieur?"

"With pleasure," Patissot replied.

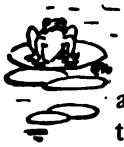
They went away while citizeness Césarine Brau was preparing to respond.

THE WRECK

YESTERDAY was the last day of December. In the evening I dined with my old friend, George Garin. Just as we finished, the servant brought him a letter covered with postmarks and foreign stamps.

"You will permit me?" said George to me, as he took the letter.

"Certainly," I replied.



He began to read eight pages of writing in a large English hand, crisscrossed in every direction. He read them slowly and with the deep attention that one gives to those matters which touch the heart. At last he laid the letter down on a corner of the mantelpiece and said: "This letter concerns a singular story I never told you, a sentimental adventure, nevertheless, that happened to me! Oh, what a strange New Year's day, that year! It was twenty years ago—I was almost thirty, and now I am fifty!

"I was then an inspector of the maritime insurance company of which I am the manager to-day. I was making my plans to pass New Year's day at Paris, since everyone observes that day as a holiday,

when I received a letter from the manager directing me to leave at once for the Isle of Ré, where a three-master from Saint-Nazaire, insured by us, had gone ashore. It was then eight o'clock in the morning. I arrived at the Company's offices at ten o'clock to receive my instructions; and the same evening I took the express train, which left me at La Rochelle the next day — the thirty-first of December.

"I had two hours on my hands before taking the boat, the 'Jean Guiton,' for Ré. I took a walk around the town. La Rochelle is really a strange town of much individuality, with streets as confusing as a labyrinth, and sidewalks running under long galleries in the form of arcades, like those in the Rue de Rivoli, but lower, like galleries and arcades flattened out, having a mysterious look, and seeming to have been constructed in bygone ages, and to have remained as accessories for conspirators, to be used in wars of religion, heroic and savage. It is truly the typical old Huguenot city, grave, discreet, without any superb art to catch the eye, without any of those admirable public edifices which render Rouen so magnificent, but yet remarkable for its severe physiognomy. It was once a city of obstinate fighters; and it bred fanatics,—that city where the faith of the Calvinists fed itself, and where the plot of the four sergeants was hatched.

"After I had wandered for some time through these strange streets, I took the little steamboat, which was to take me to the Isle of Ré. It started, puffing, with an angry air, passed between the two ancient towers that guard the port, crossed the roads, passed the breakwater built by Richelieu, the enor-

mous blocks of stone of which it is constructed being on a level with the water, inclosing the city like an immense collar; then it turned to the right.

"It was a somber day, oppressing, and crushing all thought,—one of those gloomy days which seem to bind the heart, and extinguish in us all force and energy; a gray day, glacial, obscured by a heavy fog, cold and humid, the air as infectious to breathe as the fumes of a sewer.

"Beneath this sinister ceiling of fog, the yellow sea, with the sandy bottom of these illimitable beaches, was without a wrinkle, without a movement, without life, a sheet of murky, stagnant, greasy water. The 'Jean Guiton' passed along, rolling a little, cutting through the smooth opaque, and leaving behind a few choppy waves and undulations which soon calmed again.

"I began a conversation with the captain, a little man so dumpy as almost to appear to have no legs; he was round, like his boat, and balanced himself like it, too. I desired some details concerning the wreck I was going to verify. A big three-master, full-rigged ship from Saint-Nazaire, the 'Marie Joseph,' had gone ashore, on a stormy night, on the sands of the Isle of Ré.

"The tempest had thrown the ship so far up, wrote the owner, that it had been impossible to float her again, and they were obliged to save at once everything that could be taken off her. It was therefore necessary for me to verify the wreck, estimate what had been her condition before the catastrophe, and judge whether every effort had been made to float her. I was there as the agent of the Company, in

order to testify afterward, if it became necessary in case a lawsuit was brought against the owner. Upon receipt of my report the director would take such measures as he thought best to guard our interests.

"The captain of the 'Jean Guiton' was perfectly acquainted with all the circumstances, having been called to take part with his own vessel in the attempt to save the wreck.

"He told me the story of the wreck, which, after all, was very simple. The 'Marie Joseph' had been caught in a furious tempest, was lost all night, sailing at hazard on a foamy sea, and finally had been thrown on the immense banks of sand which at low water change the coasts of this region into veritable deserts. During our conversation I looked around and before me. Between the ocean and the heavy sky remained a clear space which the eye could penetrate at a considerable distance. We were following a coast line.

"'Is that the Isle of Ré?' I inquired.

"'Yes, Monsieur,' the captain replied. And, suddenly extending his hand, he pointed at something almost invisible, in mid-ocean, saying: 'There's your ship!'

"'The "Marie Joseph"?'

"'Why, yes, Monsieur.'

"I was astonished. That black point, almost invisible, which I should have taken for a rock, appeared at least three kilometers from the coast.

"'But, Captain,' I said, 'there must be a hundred fathoms of water at the spot you point out to me.'

"He laughed, and said: 'A hundred fathoms, my friend? Not two fathoms, I assure you!'

"The captain was a Bordeaux man. After a moment he continued: 'We are at high water, forty minutes after nine. Walk along by the beach after breakfast, with your hands in your pockets, starting from the Hotel Dauphin, and I promise you that at ten minutes of three, or by three o'clock at the latest, you will be at the wreck, with dry feet, my friend, and you will have from an hour and forty-five minutes to two hours to remain on her,—not longer, or you would be caught by the high tide. The farther the sea recedes, the quicker it comes in. It is as flat as a bedbug, that coast! Start on your return walk ten minutes before five, if you are wise; and come on board the "Jean Guiton" at half past seven, and we will land you this evening on the dock at La Rochelle.'

"I thanked the captain, and went to sit down on the forward deck of the steamboat to look at the little town of Saint Martin, which we were rapidly approaching. It resembled most of the miniature ports that serve as capitals for all the poor islands that are strewn along the shores of the continents. It was a fairly large village of fishermen, who stand with one foot in the water and the other on the land, living on fish and fowls, vegetables and shellfish, radishes and mussels. The island is very low, little cultivated, and yet it appears to be well inhabited, but I did not go into the interior.

"After having my breakfast, I ascended a little promontory; then, as the tide was going out rapidly, I took my route across the sands toward a black rock which I could see rising above the water far below me. I crossed the yellow plain, which felt moist and elastic under my feet.

"The sea, which a short time ago, covered the sand that I was treading, was now far off, appearing to be running away out of sight, and I could no longer see the line that distinguished the sand from the ocean. It seemed to me that I was a witness of a supernatural and gigantic enchantment. A moment ago the Atlantic was there before me, then it had disappeared in the sand, as a scene disappears in the trapdoor of a theater, and I walked through a sandy desert. Only the penetrating odor of salt water remained to me. I distinguished the aroma of seaweed, the smell of the salt waves, the invigorating air of the coast. I walked quickly; I was no longer cold: I looked at the wreck on the sand, and it appeared to grow larger as I approached, resembling a great whale thrown on the sand.

"The vessel seemed to have come out of the soil, and, lying upon that immense flat and yellow stretch, it assumed surprising proportions. I arrived there at last, after an hour's walking. She lay crushed and broken, showing her shattered wooden shell pierced with enormous nails. The sand had already attacked her, entering by all the cracks, and it held her, possessed her, to quit her no more forever. She appeared to have taken root in the sand. The prow had plunged deep into that soft and perfidious substance, but on the lifted stern, thrown up toward the sky, these words, seeming like a desperate cry for help, appeared in white letters on the blackened hull: 'Marie Joseph.'

"I climbed up this corpse of a ship by the lower side; then, arriving on deck, I penetrated the interior. Daylight, coming in through the broken hatches and

the fissures in the sides, gave a sort of somber atmosphere to the long cave-like interior filled with demolished woodwork. Nothing could be seen inside but the sand, which served as a soil for the subsoil of planks.

"I began to make my notes on the condition of the vessel. I was seated on a broken, empty barrel, and I wrote by means of the light that entered through a large fissure, through which I could see the wide stretch of beach. A curious shiver of cold and solitude ran up and down my spine at times: and occasionally I stopped writing to listen to vague, mysterious noise within the wreck—a noise made by crabs scratching the wood with their hooked claws, the sounds of a thousand little animals of the sea installed already within this corpse, and also the soft, regular noise of the teredo, like the driving of an auger, which gnaws ceaselessly at all old timbers, which he hollows first and then devours.

"Suddenly I heard human voices quite near me! I jumped up as if confronted by an apparition. I really thought for a second that I was going to see rise, from the bottom of this sinister hold, two drowned men who would tell me the story of their death. It did not take me long to climb up on deck by the strength of my wrists, and there I perceived standing, at the prow of the vessel, a tall gentleman, who looked like an Englishman, with three young girls. They seemed more frightened than I, at seeing a living being appear so unexpectedly on the abandoned three-master. The youngest of the girls ran away. The two others threw their arms around the man, who appeared to be their father. He had simply

opened his mouth on seeing me; this was the only sign of emotion he gave.

"After a few seconds he spoke: 'Oh, Monsieur, are you the proprietor of this vessel?'

"'Yes, Monsieur.'

"'Can I visit it?' he asked.

"'Yes, Monsieur, if you wish.' I replied.

"He then pronounced a long English phrase, in which I could distinguish only the word 'gracious,' repeated several times.

"As he was looking for a place to climb up, I showed him the best place and gave him my hand to help him. He came up, and then we helped the three reassured young girls. They were charming, especially the eldest,—a blonde of eighteen years, fresh as a flower, and exceedingly delicate and dainty. Truly the pretty English girls resemble the tender fruits of the sea. One would have said that this *demoiselle* had come from the sand, and that her light hair had acquired its shade from it. English girls, with their exquisite freshness, make one think of the delicate colors of the rosy ocean-shells and the beautiful mother-of-pearl, rare and mysterious, shut up in the profound, unknown deeps of the sea!

"This young lady spoke French a little better than her father, and she therefore became our interpreter. I had to relate to them the story of the wreck, with all the details, which I invented as if I had been a spectator of the catastrophe. Then the whole family went down into the interior of the wreck. From the moment that they penetrated that somber gallery, they gave vent to cries of astonishment and admiration; and suddenly the father and the three girls pro-

duced sketchbooks from the pockets of their great waterproof cloaks, and all began at the same time to make crayon sketches of this strange and uncanny place.

"They were seated side by side on a projecting beam, and the four sketchbooks on the eight knees were soon covered with little black lines which were to represent the gaping interior of the 'Marie Joseph.' While occupied with her drawing, the eldest of the three girls chatted with me, while I continued to inspect the skeleton of the vessel. I learned that they were passing the winter at Biarritz, and that they had come to the Isle of Ré expressly to see this three-masted wreck. They had nothing of the English arrogance, these people. They were good and simple, and belonged to that race of eternal travelers with which England covers the face of the earth. The father was long and dry-looking, and had a red face framed with a white beard. His daughters had long limbs, and looked like little stilt-walkers growing up, they too, had a dry appearance, except the eldest one, but all three were very pleasant, especially that charming eldest daughter!

"This girl had a fascinating fashion of talking and relating things, laughing, understanding and not understanding, raising her eyes to question me,—eyes as blue as deep waters,—occasionally pausing in her drawing to guess the meaning of my words, then returning to her work, saying 'yes' or 'no,' and I was so charmed that I would have remained an indefinite time listening to her and watching her.

"Suddenly she murmured: 'I heard a little movement on the boat.'

"I listened, and I distinguished immediately a little, light, singular noise which did not cease. What was it? I got up to look through the crevice, and I gave a violent shout. The sea had reached us and was about to surround us. We went immediately on deck. We were too late! The water was around us, and was running toward the coast with a prodigious swiftness. No, it was not running—it glided, galloped, spread like a swiftly extending spot upon linen. Only a few inches covered the sand, and already we could not see the flying line of the imperceptible flood.

"The Englishman would have jumped off; I held him; flight was impossible on account of the deep pools which we had been obliged to go around in coming, and which now we should fall into inevitably if we attempted to return.

"There was a moment of terrible agony in our hearts; then the little English girl began to smile, and murmured: 'It is we who are the shipwrecked ones.'

"I had a desire to laugh, but fear seized me, a cowardly fear, frightful, base, as tricky as this flood. Every danger that surrounded us flashed upon me at the same moment; I felt impelled to cry out: 'Help!' But to whom should I call?

"The two little English girls clung close to their father, who looked with consternation at the unbounded sea around us. Night was falling as rapidly as the ocean rose, a heavy night, damp and cold.

"'There is nothing for us to do but remain on this boat, Monsieur,' I said at last.

"'Oh, yes, Monsieur! I suppose you are right," assented the Englishman.

"We remained on deck a quarter of an hour, perhaps longer, looking around at that yellowish water, which thickened and whirled, and seemed to boil and triumph over the immense, reconquered beach.

"One of the little girls was cold, and the idea came to us to go down into the hold, to seek shelter from the light but chill breeze which tingled the skin. I looked down over the hatch. The vessel was full of water! We were obliged, therefore, to place ourselves behind the planks in the stern, which protected us a little.

"Darkness now enveloped us, and we remained there crowded one against the other, surrounded by night and water. I felt trembling against my shoulder the shoulder of the little English girl, whose teeth chattered from time to time; but I felt also the warmth of her body through her garments, and that warmth was as delicious to me as a kiss. We talked no longer; we sat there perfectly still, crouched like wild animals in a ditch in times of storm; and yet, notwithstanding the night, notwithstanding the terrible and growing danger, I began to feel happy; happy, in spite of the cold and peril; happy, in spite of these long hours of darkness and agony, for the reason that they were passed on this plank so near to that pretty fascinating girl! I asked myself what was the cause of that strange sensation of well-being and joy which penetrated me. What was it? Can one tell? Because she was there? Who, she? A little unknown English girl! I did not love her. I did not know her at all, and yet I felt myself softened, conquered! I wished to save her, to devote myself to her, to do a thousand foolish things!

Strange! How is it that the presence of a woman upsets us in this way? Is it the power of her feminine charm which envelops us? Is it the seduction of youth and beauty which intoxicates us as does fermented wine? Is it not rather the first manifestation of love, of the mysterious yearning that searches forever to unite our beings, which tries its power, as one waters the earth in order to bring forth the flowers, from the moment that fate has placed a man and a woman face to face, filling them with emotion, a confused emotion, secret and deep?

"The silence of the darkness and the sky became frightful, for we could now distinguish around us a vague, light murmur, of infinite suggestion, the sound of the pitiless, mounting sea, and the monotonous splashing of the current against the vessel.

"Suddenly I heard sobs. The youngest of the girls was crying. Her father tried to console her, and they began to speak English which I did not understand. I guessed that he was trying to reassure her, but that she continued to feel frightened.

"'Do you feel cold, Mademoiselle?' I asked my fair neighbor.

"'Oh, yes, Monsieur! I am very cold,' she replied.

"I wished to give her my cloak; she refused it; but I had already taken it off and I covered her with it, in spite of her resistance. In the little struggle my hand met hers, which sent a charming thrill through my whole being!

"The air had become gradually sharper, and the chopping of the water against the sides of the boat was stronger. I rose; a strong breeze met me in the

face. The wind was rising. The Englishman perceived this fact at the same time, and he said simply: 'That wind will be bad for us, Monsieur.'

"It was bad beyond a doubt. It meant certain death for us if the waves, even if feeble, should attack and shake the wreck, so broken and disjointed now that the first wave a little stronger than the others would break it into kindling wood.

"Our agony increased from second to second with the increasing violence of the squalls. Now the waters broke a little, and I saw through the darkness white lines of foam appear and disappear, while each wave, as it flung itself against the hull of the 'Marie Joseph,' shook it with a short trembling movement, which communicated itself to our hearts.

"The English girl trembled; I felt her shiver against me, and I had an insane desire to take her in my arms. Below us and before us, on the right and the left, and behind us, sparkled the lighthouses on the coast, with white, yellow, and red lights, revolving like enormous eyes, as if a giant were watching us. One of them especially irritated me. It was extinguished every thirty seconds, to reappear in the same time; and it seemed indeed like a malevolent eye, with its eyelid continually opening and closing.

"From time to time the Englishman struck a match to see what time it was; then he put his watch back in his pocket. Suddenly he said to me with a solemn gravity, over the heads of his daughters:

"'Monsieur, I wish you a happy New Year!'

"It was midnight! I gave him my hand, which he shook cordially; then he said something in Eng-

lish, and immediately he and his daughters began to sing 'God Save the Queen!' The strains rose in the black and silent night, and were lost in space. My first impulse was to laugh; then I was seized by a strange and powerful emotion. There was something sinister and superb in the sound of this song of the shipwrecked, of the condemned, something like a prayer, and also something grander still, comparable only to the ancient and sublime gladiatorial chant, '*Ave, Cæsar, morituri te salutant!*'

"When the song was finished, I asked my neighbor to sing something alone, a ballad, a romance,—anything she wished, to make us forget our troubles. She consented, and soon her clear, youthful voice floated on the night air. She sang something sad, without doubt, for the notes came slowly and died away slowly from her mouth, and flew like wounded birds across the waves.

"The sea now grew rougher, and struck with force against our wreck. For myself, I thought no longer of anything but that voice. And I thought also of sirens. If a ship had passed close to us, what would the sailors have said? My tormented spirit was lost in a sweet dream! A siren! Was she not in reality a siren, this maiden of the sea, who had held me to this worm-eaten wreck, and who soon might draw me down with her into the waves?

"Suddenly we were all five of us turned over on the deck, for the 'Marie Joseph' had lurched to her right side. The English girl had fallen on me, and I had seized her in my arms, and, insanely, without knowing, without understanding what I was doing, thinking my last moment had come, I kissed her lips,

her cheeks, her temples, her hair! The vessel made no further movement; we also did not move.

"The father said 'Kate!' The maiden I held replied 'Yes!' and made a movement to disengage herself. At that moment I could have wished that the boat would break apart, that I might fall into the ocean with her in my arms.

"The Englishman spoke again: 'That was a little shake-up—there is nothing to fear. I have my three daughters still!'

"I rose slowly, and suddenly I saw a light on the water quite near us. I called out. Some one replied. It was a boat which was looking for us, the owner of the hotel having foreseen our imprudence.

"We were saved! I was broken-hearted! They picked us up from our wreck and rowed us to Saint Martin.

"The Englishman now rubbed his hands and murmured: 'We shall have a good supper, a good supper!'

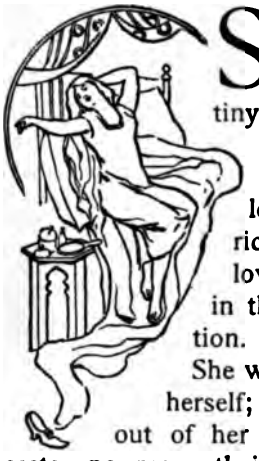
"We had our supper. But I was not gay—I regretted the 'Marie Joseph!'

"It became necessary to separate the next day, after many hand-shakes and many promises to write. They started toward Biarritz. It would have required but little encouragement for me to follow them. I was a fool; I just missed asking that girl's hand in marriage. Certainly, if we had passed eight days together, I would have married her. How feeble and incomprehensible a man is at times!

"Two years rolled by without my hearing a word from them; then one day I received a letter from New York. She was married, and wrote to tell me of it.

And ever since then we have written to each other once a year on the first day of January. She tells me of her life, writes of her children, of her sisters, never of her husband! Why? Ah! why? And I, —I write to her only of the 'Marie Joseph'! She is perhaps the only woman I ever loved—no, that I ever would have loved. Ah! can one tell? Circumstances carry us along, and then—everything changes. She must be old now. I should not recognize her if I should see her. Ah! she of the other days—she of the wreck—what a divine creature she was! She writes me that her hair is entirely white. My God! that gave me a horrible shock! Ah! that golden hair! That lovely hair exists no longer! How sad all changes are!"

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE



She was one of those pretty, charming young ladies, born, as if through an error of destiny, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of becoming known, appreciated, loved, and married by a man either rich or distinguished; and she allowed herself to marry a petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education.

She was simple, not being able to adorn herself; but she was unhappy, as one out of her class; for women belong to no caste, no race; their grace, their beauty, and their charm serving them in the place of birth and family. Their inborn finesse, their instinctive elegance, their suppleness of wit are their only aristocracy, making some daughters of the people the equal of great ladies.

She suffered incessantly, feeling herself born for all delicacies and luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls, the worn

chairs, and the faded stuffs. All these things, which another woman of her station would not have noticed, tortured and angered her. The sight of the little Breton, who made this humble home, awoke in her sad regrets and desperate dreams. She thought of quiet antechambers, with their Oriental hangings, lighted by high, bronze torches, and of the two great footmen in short trousers who sleep in the large armchairs, made sleepy by the heavy air from the heating apparatus. She thought of large drawing-rooms, hung in old silks, of graceful pieces of furniture carrying bric-à-brac of inestimable value, and of the little perfumed coquettish apartments, made for five o'clock chats with most intimate friends, men known and sought after, whose attention all women envied and desired.

When she seated herself for dinner, before the round table where the tablecloth had been used three days, opposite her husband who uncovered the tureen with a delighted air, saying: "Oh! the good potpie! I know nothing better than that—" she would think of the elegant dinners, of the shining silver, of the tapestries peopling the walls with ancient personages and rare birds in the midst of fairy forests; she thought of the exquisite food served on marvelous dishes, of the whispered gallantries, listened to with the smile of the sphinx, while eating the rose-colored flesh of the trout or a chicken's wing.

She had neither frocks nor jewels, nothing. And she loved only those things. She felt that she was made for them. She had such a desire to please, to be sought after, to be clever, and courted.

She had a rich friend, a schoolmate at the convent, whom she did not like to visit, she suffered so much when she returned. And she wept for whole days from chagrin, from regret, from despair, and disappointment.

* * * * * * *

One evening her husband returned elated, bearing in his hand a large envelope.

"Here," said he, "here is something for you."

She quickly tore open the wrapper and drew out a printed card on which were inscribed these words:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame George Ramponneau ask the honor of Mr. and Mrs. Loisel's company Monday evening, January 18, at the Minister's residence."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation spitefully upon the table murmuring:

"What do you suppose I want with that?"

"But, my dearie, I thought it would make you happy. You never go out, and this is an occasion, and a fine one! I had a great deal of trouble to get it. Everybody wishes one, and it is very select; not many are given to employees. You will see the whole official world there."

She looked at him with an irritated eye and declared impatiently:

"What do you suppose I have to wear to such a thing as that?"

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

"Why, the dress you wear when we go to the theater. It seems very pretty to me—"

He was silent, stupefied, in dismay, at the sight of his wife weeping. Two great tears fell slowly from the corners of his eyes toward the corners of his mouth; he stammered:

"What is the matter? What is the matter?"

By a violent effort, she had controlled her vexation and responded in a calm voice, wiping her moist cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress and consequently I cannot go to this affair. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better fitted out than I."

He was grieved, but answered:

"Let us see, Matilda. How much would a suitable costume cost, something that would serve for other occasions, something very simple?"

She reflected for some seconds, making estimates and thinking of a sum that she could ask for without bringing with it an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she said, in a hesitating voice:

"I cannot tell exactly, but it seems to me that four hundred francs ought to cover it."

He turned a little pale, for he had saved just this sum to buy a gun that he might be able to join some hunting parties the next summer, on the plains at Nanterre, with some friends who went to shoot larks up there on Sunday. Nevertheless, he answered:

"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. But try to have a pretty dress."

* * * * * * *

The day of the ball approached and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, disturbed, anxious. Nevertheless her

dress was nearly ready. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter with you? You have acted strangely for two or three days."

And she responded: "I am vexed not to have a jewel, not one stone, nothing to adorn myself with. I shall have such a poverty-laden look. I would prefer not to go to this party."

He replied: "You can wear some natural flowers. At this season they look very *chic*. For ten francs you can have two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced. "No," she replied, "there is nothing more humiliating than to have a shabby air in the midst of rich women."

Then her husband cried out: "How stupid we are! Go and find your friend Mrs. Forestier and ask her to lend you her jewels. You are well enough acquainted with her to do this."

She uttered a cry of joy: "It is true!" she said. "I had not thought of that."

The next day she took herself to her friend's house and related her story of distress. Mrs. Forestier went to her closet with the glass doors, took out a large jewel-case, brought it, opened it, and said: "Choose, my dear."

She saw at first some bracelets, then a collar of pearls, then a Venetian cross of gold and jewels and of admirable workmanship. She tried the jewels before the glass, hesitated, but could neither decide to take them nor leave them. Then she asked:

"Have you nothing more?"

"Why, yes. Look for yourself. I do not know what will please you."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a supurb necklace of diamonds, and her heart beat fast with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took them up. She placed them about her throat against her dress, and remained in ecstasy before them. Then she asked, in a hesitating voice, full of anxiety:

"Could you lend me this? Only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She fell upon the neck of her friend, embraced her with passion, then went away with her treasure.

* * * * * * *

The day of the ball arrived. Mme. Loisel was a great success. She was the prettiest of all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and full of joy. All the men noticed her, asked her name, and wanted to be presented. All the members of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. The Minister of Education paid her some attention.

She danced with enthusiasm, with passion, intoxicated with pleasure, thinking of nothing, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a kind of cloud of happiness that came of all this homage, and all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and this victory so complete and sweet to the heart of woman.

She went home toward four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been half asleep in one of the little salons since midnight, with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying themselves very much.

He threw around her shoulders the wraps they had carried for the coming home, modest garments

of everyday wear, whose poverty clashed with the elegance of the ball costume. She felt this and wished to hurry away in order not to be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in rich furs.

Loisel retained her: "Wait," said he. "You will catch cold out there. I am going to call a cab."

But she would not listen and descended the steps rapidly. When they were in the street, they found no carriage; and they began to seek for one, hailing the coachmen whom they saw at a distance.

They walked along toward the Seine, hopeless and shivering. Finally they found on the dock one of those old, nocturnal *coupés* that one sees in Paris after nightfall, as if they were ashamed of their misery by day.

It took them as far as their door in Martyr street, and they went wearily up to their apartment. It was all over for her. And on his part, he remembered that he would have to be at the office by ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps from her shoulders before the glass, for a final view of herself in her glory. Suddenly she uttered a cry. Her necklace was not around her neck.

Her husband, already half undressed, asked: "What is the matter?"

She turned toward him excitedly:

"I have—I have—I no longer have Mrs. Forestier's necklace."

He arose in dismay: "What! How is that? It is not possible."

And they looked in the folds of the dress, in the folds of the mantle, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

He asked: "You are sure you still had it when we left the house?"

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule as we came out."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. It is probable. Did you take the number?"

"No. And you, did you notice what it was?"

"No."

They looked at each other utterly cast down. Finally, Loisel dressed himself again.

"I am going," said he, "over the track where we went on foot, to see if I can find it."

And he went. She remained in her evening gown, not having the force to go to bed, stretched upon a chair, without ambition or thoughts.

Toward seven o'clock her husband returned. He had found nothing.

He went to the police and to the cab offices, and put an advertisement in the newspapers, offering a reward; he did everything that afforded them a suspicion of hope.

She waited all day in a state of bewilderment before this frightful disaster. Loisel returned at evening with his face harrowed and pale; he had discovered nothing.

"It will be necessary," said he, "to write to your friend that you have broken the clasp of the necklace and that you will have it repaired. That will give us time to turn around."

She wrote as he dictated.

* * * * * * *

At the end of a week, they had lost all hope. And Loisel, older by five years, declared:

"We must take measures to replace this jewel."

The next day they took the box which had inclosed it, to the jeweler whose name was on the inside. He consulted his books:

"It is not I, Madame," said he, "who sold this necklace; I only furnished the casket."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler seeking a necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, and ill, both of them, with chagrin and anxiety.

In a shop of the Palais-Royal, they found a chaplet of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was valued at forty thousand francs. They could get it for thirty-six thousand.

They begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made an arrangement by which they might return it for thirty-four thousand francs if they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He borrowed the rest.

He borrowed it, asking for a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis of this one, and three louis of that one. He gave notes, made ruinous promises, took money of usurers and the whole race of lenders. He compromised his whole existence, in fact, risked his signature, without even knowing whether he could make it good or not, and, harassed by anxiety for the future, by the black

misery which surrounded him, and by the prospect of all physical privations and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace, depositing on the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mrs. Loisel took back the jewels to Mrs. Forestier, the latter said to her in a frigid tone:

"You should have returned them to me sooner, for I might have needed them."

She did open the jewel-box as her friend feared she would. If she should perceive the substitution, what would she think? What should she say? Would she take her for a robber?

* * * * * * *

Mrs. Loisel now knew the horrible life of necessity. She did her part, however, completely, heroically. It was necessary to pay this frightful debt. She would pay it. They sent away the maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented some rooms under a mansard roof.

She learned the heavy cares of a household, the odious work of a kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails upon the greasy pots and the bottoms of the stewpans. She washed the soiled linen, the chemises and dishcloths, which she hung on the line to dry; she took down the refuse to the street each morning and brought up the water, stopping at each landing to breathe. And, clothed like a woman of the people, she went to the grocer's, the butcher's, and the fruiterer's, with her basket on her arm, shopping, haggling, defending to the last sou her miserable money.

Every month it was necessary to renew some notes, thus obtaining time, and to pay others.

The husband worked evenings, putting the books of some merchants in order, and nights he often did copying at five sous a page.

And this life lasted for ten years.

At the end of ten years, they had restored all, all, with interest of the usurer, and accumulated interest besides.

Mrs. Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman, the crude woman of the poor household. Her hair badly dressed, her skirts awry, her hands red, she spoke in a loud tone, and washed the floors in large pails of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would seat herself before the window and think of that evening party of former times, of that ball where she was so beautiful and so flattered.

How would it have been if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How singular is life, and how full of changes! How small a thing will ruin or save one!

* * * * * * *

One Sunday, as she was taking a walk in the Champs-Elysées to rid herself of the cares of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman walking with a child. It was Mrs. Forestier, still young, still pretty, still attractive. Mrs. Loisel was affected. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She approached her. "Good morning, Jeanne."

Her friend did not recognize her and was astonished to be so familiarly addressed by this common personage. She stammered:

"But, Madame—I do not know—You must be mistaken—"

"No, I am Matilda Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry of astonishment: "Oh! my poor Matilda! How you have changed—"

"Yes, I have had some hard days since I saw you; and some miserable ones—and all because of you—"

"Because of me? How is that?"

"You recall the diamond necklace that you loaned me to wear to the Commissioner's ball?"

"Yes, very well."

"Well, I lost it."

"How is that, since you returned it to me?"

"I returned another to you exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us who have nothing. But it is finished and I am decently content."

Madame Forestier stopped short. She said:

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You did not perceive it then? They were just alike."

And she smiled with a proud and simple joy. Madame Forestier was touched and took both her hands as she replied:

"Oh! my poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"

CHRISTENING

"COME, doctor, a little more cognac."

"With pleasure." The old navy doctor watched the golden liquid flow into his glass, held it up to the light, took a sip and kept it in his mouth a long while before swallowing it, and said:

"What a delicious poison! I should say, what a captivating destroyer of humanity! You do not know it as I know it. You may have read that remarkable book called 'L'Assommoir,' but you have not seen a whole tribe of savages exterminated by this same poison. I have seen with my own eyes a strange and terrible drama, which was the result of too much alcohol. It happened not very far from here, in a little village near Pont-l'abbé in Brittany. I was on a vacation and was living in the little country house which my father had left me. You all know that wild country surrounded by the sea—that wicked sea, always lying in wait for some new victim! The poor fishermen go out day and night in their little boats and the wicked

sea upsets their boats and swallows them! Fearlessly they go out, yet feeling uneasy as to their safety, but half of the time they are intoxicated. 'When the bottle is full we feel safe, but when it is empty we feel lost'; they say. If you go into their huts, you will never find the father and if you ask the woman what has become of her man, she will answer pointing to the raging sea: 'He stayed there one night, when he had too much drink and my eldest son too.' She has still four strong boys; it will be their turn soon!

"Well, as I have said, I was living at my little country house with one servant, an old sailor, and the Breton family who took care of the place during my absence, which consisted of two sisters and the husband of one of them, who was also my gardener.

"Toward Christmas of that year, the gardener's wife gave birth to a boy and he asked me to be godfather. I could not very well refuse, and on the strength of it he borrowed ten francs from me, 'for the church expenses,' he said.

"The christening was to take place on the second of January. For the past week the ground had been covered with snow and it was bitter cold. At nine o'clock of the morning designated, Kerandec and his sister-in-law arrived in front of my door, with a nurse carrying the baby wrapped up in a blanket, and we started for the church. The cold was terrific and I wondered how the poor little child could stand such cold. These Bretons must be made of iron, I thought, if they can stand going out in such weather at their birth!

"When we arrived at the church the door was closed. The priest had not come yet. The nurse sat on the steps and began to undress the child. I thought at first that she only wanted to arrange his clothes, but to my horror I saw that she was taking every stitch of clothing off his back! I was horrified at such imprudence and I went toward her saying:

"'What in the world are you doing? Are you crazy? Do you want to kill him?'

"'Oh, no, master," she answered placidly, 'but he must present himself before God naked.' His father and aunt looked on calmly. It was the custom in Brittany and if they had not done this they said, something would happen to the child.

"I got furiously angry. I called the father all kinds of names; I threatened to leave them and tried to cover the child by force, but in vain. The nurse ran away from me with the poor little naked body, which was fast becoming blue with the biting cold. I had made up my mind to leave these brutes to their ignorance, when I saw the priest coming along followed by the sexton and an altar boy. I ran toward him and told him in a few words what these brutes had done, but he was not a bit surprised; nor did he hurry.

"'What can I do, my dear sir? It is the custom, they all do it.'

"'But for goodness sake hurry up,' I cried impatiently.

"'I cannot go any faster,' he answered, and at last he entered the vestry. We waited outside the church-door and I suffered terribly at hearing that poor little wretch crying with pain. At last the door opened

and we went in, but the child had to remain naked during the whole ceremony. It seemed to me as if it would never come to an end. The priest crawled along like a turtle, muttered his Latin words slowly, as if he took pleasure in torturing the poor little baby. At last, the torture came to an end and the nurse wrapped the child in his blanket again. By that time the poor little thing was chilled through and was crying piteously.

"'Will you come in and sign your name to the register?' asked the priest.

"I turned to the gardener and urged him to go home immediately and warm the child up, so as to avoid pneumonia if there was still time. He promised to follow my advice, and left with his sister-in-law and the nurse. I followed the priest into the vestry, and when I had signed the register, he demanded five francs. As I had given ten francs to the father, I refused. The priest threatened to tear up the certificate and to annul the ceremony, and I, in my turn, threatened to prosecute him. We quarreled for a long time, but at last I paid the five francs.

"As soon as I got home, I ran to Kerandec's house, but neither he, nor his sister-in-law or the nurse had come home. The mother was in bed shivering with cold and she was hungry, not having eaten anything since the day before.

"'Where on earth did they go?' I asked. She did not seem the least bit surprised and answered calmly:

"'They went to have a drink in honor of the christening.' That also was the custom and I thought of my ten francs which I had given the father and

which would pay for the drinks no doubt. I sent some beef-tea to the mother and had a good fire made in her room. I was so angry at those brutes that I made up my mind to discharge them when they came back; but what worried me most was the poor little baby. What would become of him?

"At six o'clock they had not come back. I ordered my servant to wait for them and I went to bed.

"I slept soundly, as a sailor will sleep, until daybreak and did not wake until my servant brought me some hot water. As soon as I opened my eyes I asked him about Kerandec. The old sailor hesitated, then finally answered:

"'He came home past midnight as drunk as a fool; the Kermagan woman and the nurse too. I think they slept in a ditch, and the poor little baby died without their even noticing it.'

"'Dead!' I cried jumping to my feet.

"'Yes, sir, they brought it to the mother, and when she saw it she cried terribly, but they made her drink to forget her sorrow.'

"'What do you mean by "they made her drink?"'

"'This, sir. I only found out this morning. Kerandec had no more liquor and no more money to buy any, so he took the wood alcohol that you gave him for the lamp and they drank that until they had finished the bottle and now the Kerandec woman is very sick.'

"I dressed in haste, seized a cane with the firm intention of chastising those human brutes and ran to the gardener's house. The mother lay helpless, dying from the effects of the alcohol, with the discolored

corpse of her baby lying near her, while Kerandec and the Kermagan woman lay snoring on the floor.

"I did everything in my power to save the woman, but she died at noon."

The old doctor having concluded his narrative, took the bottle of cognac, poured out a glass for himself, and having held it up to the light, swallowed the golden liquid and smacked his lips.

A COSTLY OUTING

HECTOR DE GRIBELIN, descendant of an old provincial family, had spent his early years in his ancestral home and had finished his studies under the guidance of an old abbé. The family was far from rich, but they kept up appearances the best way they could. At the age of twenty a position was procured for him at the Navy administration, at one thousand five hundred francs a year, but like a great many, not being prepared for the battle, his first three years of office life had been exceedingly hard.

He had renewed acquaintance with a few old friends of his family, poor like himself, but living in the secluded Faubourg St.-Germain, keeping up appearances at any cost, sacrificing everything in order to hold their rank.

It was there he had met and married a young girl, titled but penniless. Two children had blessed their union. Hector and his wife struggled constantly to make both ends meet and for the past four years

they had known no other distractions than a walk on Sunday to the Champs-Elysées, and a few evenings at the theater, a friend giving them tickets.

His chief had just intrusted him with some extra work and he received the extra compensation of three hundred francs. Coming home that night he said to his wife:

"My dear Henriette, we ought to do something with this money; a little outing in the country for the children for instance."

They had a lengthy discussion, and finally decided on a family picnic.

"We have had so very few outings," said Hector, "that we may as well do things right. We will hire a rig for you and the little ones, and I will hire a horse; it will do me good."

They talked of nothing else all week. Each night, he would dance his elder son up and down on his foot and say:

"This is the way papa will ride next Sunday." And the boy would ride chairs all day screaming:

"This is papa on horseback." Even the servant marveled when she heard Hector tell of his feats on horseback when he was home and how he would ride at the side of the carriage.

"When once on a horse I am afraid of nothing," he would say. "If they could give me a frisky animal I would like it all the better. You will see how I ride, and, if you like, we can come back by the Champs-Elysées when everybody is coming home. We shall cut quite a figure, and I should not be sorry to meet some one from the office; there is nothing like it to inspire respect."

At last Sunday came. The carriage and the horse were at the door, and Hector came down immediately, holding a newly-bought riding-whip, to look the horse over. He examined him from head to foot, opened his mouth, told his age, and as the family was coming out at that moment, he discoursed on horses in general and that one in particular, which he declared to be an excellent animal.

When everyone was comfortably placed in the carriage, Hector examined the saddle, and mounting with a spring, dropped on the horse with such force that he immediately set up a dance which almost threw his rider. Hector became flustered and tried to calm him, saying: "Come, old fellow, be quiet." And having succeeded in calming him a little he asked:

"Is everybody ready?"

Everybody said they were and the party proceeded. All eyes were turned on Hector, who affected the English seat and leaped up and down on his saddle in an exaggerated manner. He looked straight before him, contracting his brow and looking very pale. His wife and the servant each held one of the boys on their lap and every minute they would say:

"Look at papa!" And the boys, overcome with joy, uttered piercing screams.

The horse, frightened at so much noise, started off at a gallop and while Hector tried to stop him his hat fell off. The driver had to come down and pick it up, and having recovered it, Hector shouted to his wife:

"Make the children stop screaming, will you? They will make the horse run away."

They arrived at last. The baskets having been opened they lunched on the grass. Although the driver looked after the horses, Hector went every minute to see if his horse wanted anything. He patted him and fed him bread, cake, and sugar.

"He is a great trotter," he said to his wife. "He shook me at first, but you saw how quick I subdued him. He knows his master now."

They came back by the Champs-Elysées as agreed. The weather being beautiful, the avenue was crowded with carriages and the sidewalks lined with pedestrians. The horse, scenting the stable, suddenly took to his heels. He dashed between carriages like a whirlwind and Hector's efforts to stop him were unavailing. The carriage containing his family was far behind. In front of the Palais de l'Industrie, the horse turned to the right at a gallop. An old woman was at that moment leisurely crossing the street, and Hector, who was unable to stop the horse shouted: "Hey there, hey!" But the old woman was deaf, perhaps, for she slowly kept on until the horse struck her with such force that she turned a triple somersault and landed ten feet away. Several people shouted: "Stop him."

Hector was distracted and held on desperately to the horse's mane, crying: "Help, help!" A terrible shock sent him over the horse's head like a bomb, and he landed in the arms of a policeman who was running toward him. An angry crowd gathered. An old gentleman wearing a decoration was especially angry.

"Confound it, sir!" he said, "if you cannot ride a horse why do you not stay at home instead of running over people!"

Four men were carrying the old woman, who to all appearances was dead.

"Take this woman to a drug-store," said the old gentleman, "and let us go to the station-house."

A crowd followed Hector, who walked between two policemen, while a third led his horse. At that moment the carriage appeared, and his wife taking in the situation at a glance, ran toward him; the servant and the children came behind crying. He explained that his horse had knocked a woman down, but it was nothing, he would be home very soon.

Arrived at the station-house, he gave his name, his place of employment, and awaited news of the injured woman. A policeman came back with the information that the woman's name was Mme. Simon, and that she was a charwoman sixty-five years old. She had regained consciousness, but she suffered internally, she claimed. When Hector found that she was not dead, he recovered his spirits and promised to defray the expenses of her illness. He went to the drug-store where they had taken the old woman. An immense crowd blocked the doorway. The old woman was whining and groaning pitifully. Two doctors were examining her.

"There are no bones broken," they said, "but we are afraid she is hurt internally."

"Do you suffer much?" asked Hector.

"Oh, yes."

"Where?"

"I feel as if my inside was on fire."

"Then you are the cause of the accident?" said a doctor approaching.

"Yes, sir," said Hector.

"This woman must go to a sanitarium. I know one where they will take her for six francs a day; shall I fix it for you?"

Hector thanked him gratefully and went home relieved. He found his wife in tears, and he comforted her saying:

"Don't worry, she is much better already. I sent her to a sanitarium, and in three days she will be all right."

After his work the next day he went to see Mme. Simon. She was eating some beef soup which she seemed to relish.

"Well," said Hector, "how do you feel?"

"No better, my poor man," she answered. "I feel as good as dead!"

The doctor advised waiting; complications might arise. He waited three days, then went to see the old woman again. Her skin was clear, her eyes bright, but as soon as she saw Hector she commenced to whine:

"I can't move any more, my poor man; I'll be like this for the rest of my days!"

Hector felt a shiver running up and down his back. He asked for the doctor and inquired about the patient.

"I am puzzled," the doctor said. "Every time we try to lift her up or change her position, she utters heartrending screams; still, I am forced to believe her. I cannot say that she shams until I have seen her walk."

The old woman listened attentively; a sly look on her face. A week, two, then a month passed and still Mme. Simon did not leave her chair. Her appe-

tite was excellent, she gained flesh and joked with the other patients. She seemed to accept her lot as a well-earned rest after fifty years of labor as a charwoman.

Hector came every day and found her the same; always repeating:

"I can't move, my poor man, I can't!"

When Hector came home, his wife would ask with anxiety:

"How is Mme. Simon?"

"Just the same; absolutely no change," answered Hector dejectedly.

They dismissed the servant and economized more than ever. The money received from his chief had been spent. Hector was desperate and one day he called four doctors to hold a consultation. They examined Mme. Simon thoroughly, while she watched them slyly.

"We must make her walk," said one of the doctors.

"I can't, gentlemen; I can't!"

They took hold of her and dragged her a few steps, but she freed herself, and sank to the floor emitting such piercing screams, that they carried her back to her chair very gently.

They reserved their opinion, but concluded, however, that she was incapacitated for work.

When Hector brought the news to his wife, she collapsed.

"We had much better take her here, it would cost us less."

"In our own house! What are you thinking of?"

"What else can we do, dear? I am sure it is no fault of mine!"

A KING'S SON

THE Boulevard, that river of life, was rushing along under the golden light of the setting sun. All the sky was red, dazzling red; and behind the Madeleine an immense, brilliant cloud threw into the long avenue an oblique shower of fire, vibrating like the rays from live coals.

The gay crowd moved along in this ruddy mist as if they were in an apotheosis. Their faces were golden; their black hats and coats were reflected in shades of purple; the varnish of their shoes threw red lights upon the asphalt of the sidewalks.

Before the *cafés*, men were drinking brilliantly colored drinks, which one might take for precious stones melted in the crystal.

In the midst of the consumers, two officers, in very rich uniforms, caused all eyes to turn in their direction on account of their gold braid and grand bearing. They were chatting pleasantly, without motive, rejoicing in this glory of life, in the radiant

beauty of the evening. And they looked at the crowd —at the slow men and the hurrying women who left behind them an attractive, disturbing odor.

All at once, an enormous negro, clothed in black, corpulent, decorated with trinkets all over his duck waistcoat, his face shining as if it had been oiled, passed before them with an air of triumph. He smiled at the passers-by, he smiled at the venders of the newspapers, he smiled at the shining heavens, and the whole of Paris. He was so large that he towered above all their heads; and all the loungers that he left behind him turned to contemplate his back.

Suddenly he perceived the officers and, pushing aside the drinkers, he rushed toward them. When he was before their table, he planted upon them his shining, delighted eyes, and, raising the corners of his mouth to his ears, showed his white teeth, shining like a crescent moon in a black sky. The two men, stupefied, looked at this ebony giant without understanding his merriment.

Then he cried out, in a voice that made everybody at all the tables laugh:

"Good evenin', my Lieutenant."

One of the officers was chief of a battalion, the other was a colonel. The first said:

"I do not know you, sir; and cannot think what you can want of me."

The negro replied:

"Me like you much, Lieutenant Védie, siege of Bézi, much grapes, hunt me up."

The officer, much astonished, looked closely at the man, seeking to place him in his memory. Suddenly he cried:

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"Timbuctoo?"

The negro, radiant, struck himself on his leg, uttered a most strident laugh, and bellowed:

"Yes, ya, ya, my Lieutenant, remember Timbuctoo, ya, good evenin'."

The officer extended his hand, laughing now himself with all his heart. Then Timbuctoo became grave. He seized the officer's hand and kissed it as the custom is in Arabia, so quickly that it could not be stopped. In a confused manner, the military man said to him, his voice rather severe:

"Come, Timbuctoo, we are not in Africa. Be seated and tell me how you came to be here."

Timbuctoo swelled out his ample front and stammered, from trying to talk too quickly:

"Got much money, much, great rest'rant, good eat, Prussians come, much steal, much, Fwench cooking, Timbuctoo chef to Emperor, two hundred thousand francs for me. Ah! ah! ah! ah!"

And he laughed, twisting himself and howling, with a perfect madness of joy in his eye.

When the officer who comprehended this strange language had asked him questions for some time, he said to him:

"Well, good-bye now, Timbuctoo; I will see you again."

The negro immediately arose, shook the hand that was extended to him, properly this time, and, continuing to laugh, cried:

"Good evenin', good evenin', my Lieutenant."

He went away so content that he gesticulated as he walked until he was taken for a crazy man.

The colonel asked: "Who was that brute?"

The commander responded: "A brave boy and a brave soldier. I will tell you what I know of him; it is funny enough.

* * * * * * *

"You know that at the commencement of the war of 1870 I was shut up in Bézières, which the negro calls Bézi. We were not besieged, but blockaded. The Prussian lines surrounded us everywhere, beyond the reach of cannon, no longer shooting at us but starving us little by little.

"I was then a lieutenant. Our garrison was composed of troops of every nature, the *débris* of cut-up regiments, fugitives and marauders separated from the body of the army. We even had eleven Turcos arrive finally, one evening, from no one knew where. They presented themselves at the gates of the town, harassed, hungry, drunk, and in tatters. They were given to me.

"I soon recognized the fact that they were averse to all discipline, that they were always absent and always tipsy. I tried the police station, even the prison, without effect. My men disappeared for whole days, as if they had sunk into the earth, then reappeared intoxicated enough to fall. They had no money. Where did they get their drink? How and by what means?

"This began to puzzle me much, especially as these savages interested me with their eternal laugh and their character, which was that of a great roguish child.

"I then perceived that they blindly obeyed the biggest one of them all, the one you have just seen. He governed them by his will, planned their myste-

rious enterprises, and was chief, all-powerful and incontestable. I made him come to my house and I questioned him. Our conversation lasted a good three hours, so great was my difficulty in penetrating his surprising mixture of tongues. As for him, poor devil, he made the most unheard-of efforts to be understood, invented words, gesticulated, fairly sweated from his difficulty, wiped his brow, puffed, stopped, and then began suddenly again when he thought he had found a new means of explaining himself.

"I finally divined that he was the son of a great chief, a sort of negro king in the neighborhood of Timbuctoo. I asked him his name. He responded something like Chavaharibouhalikhranafotapolara. It appeared simpler to me to call him by the name of his country: 'Timbuctoo.' And eight days later all the garrison was calling him that and nothing else.

"A foolish desire seized me of finding out where this ex-African prince found his drink. And I discovered it in a singular way.

"One morning I was on the ramparts studying the horizon, when I perceived something moving in a vine near by. It was at the time of the vintage; the grapes were ripe, but I scarcely gave this a thought. My idea was that some spy was approaching the town, and I organized an expedition complete enough to seize the prowlers. I myself took the command, having obtained the General's authorization.

"Three small troops were to set out through three different gates and join near the suspected vine to watch. In order to cut off the retreat of any spy; one detachment had to make a march of an hour at least. One man remained upon the wall for observation, to

indicate to me by a sign that the person sought had not left the field. We preserved a deep silence, crawling, almost lying in the wheel-ruts. Finally, we reached the designated point; I suddenly deployed my soldiers, charging them quickly upon the vine, and found — Timbuctoo traveling along among the vine stocks on four paws, eating grapes, or rather snapping them up as a dog eats his soup, his mouth full, of leaves, even, snatching the bunches off with a blow of his teeth.

"I wished to make him get up; there was no longer any mystery and I comprehended why he dragged himself along upon his hands and knees.

"When he was planted upon his feet, he swayed back and forth for some seconds, extending his arms and striking his nose. He was as tipsy as any tipsy man I have ever seen.

"They brought him away on two poles. He never ceased to laugh all along the route, gesticulating with his arms and legs.

"That was the whole of it. My merry fellows had drunk of the grape itself. Then, when they could no longer drink and could not budge, they went to sleep on the spot.

"As for Timbuctoo, his love for the vine passed all belief and all measure. He lived down there after the fashion of the thrushes, which he hated with the hatred of a jealous rival. He repeated without ceasing:

"'The th'ushes eat all g'apes, the d'unkards.'

* * * * * * *

"One evening some one came to find me. Off over the plain something seemed to be moving toward us. I did not have my glass with me, and could not

distinguish what it was. It looked like a great serpent rolling itself along, or a funeral procession; how could I tell?

"I sent some men to meet this strange caravan, which soon appeared in triumphal march. Timbuctoo and nine of his companions were carrying a sort of altar, made of campaign chairs, upon which were eight cut-off heads, bloody and grimacing. The tenth Turco dragged a horse by the tail to which another was attached, and six other beasts still followed, held in the same fashion."

"This is what I learned. Having set out for the vine, my Africans had suddenly perceived a detachment of Prussian soldiers approaching a neighboring village. Instead of fleeing they concealed themselves; then, when the officers put foot to the ground at an inn to refresh themselves, the eleven merry ones threw themselves upon them, put to flight the uhlans who believed themselves attacked, killed the two sentinels, then the Colonel and the five officers comprising his escort.

"That day I embraced Timbuctoo. But I also perceived that he walked with difficulty; I believed that he was wounded. He began to laugh and said to me:

"'Me get p'ovisions for country.'

"It seems that Timbuctoo had not made war for the sake of honor, but for gain. All that he found, all that appeared to him to have any value whatever, everything that glistened, especially, he plunged into his pocket. And what a pocket! An abyss that begun at the hip and extended to the heels. Having learned the word of a trooper, he called it his 'profound.' It was, in fact, his profound! He had detached the

gold from the Prussian uniforms, the copper from their helmets, the buttons, etc., and thrown them all into his profound, which was full to the brim.

"Each day he cast in there every glistening object that fell under his eye,—pieces of tin or pieces of money,—which sometimes gave him an infinitely droll figure.

"He counted on bringing things back like an ostrich, which he resembled like a brother,—this son of a king tortured by a desire to devour these shining bodies. If he had not had his profound, what would he have done? Doubtless he would have swallowed them.

"Each morning his pocket was empty. He had a kind of general store where he heaped up his riches. Where? No one could ever discover.

"The General, foreseeing the uproar that Timbuctoo had created, had the bodies quickly interred in a neighboring village, before it was discovered that they had been decapitated. The Prussians came the next day. The mayor and seven distinguished inhabitants were shot immediately, as it had been learned through informers that they had denounced the Germans.

* * * * * * *

"The winter had come. We were harassed and desperate. There was fighting now, every day. The starved men could no longer walk. The eight Turks alone (three had been killed) were fat and shining, vigorous and always ready for battle. Timbuctoo even grew stout. He said to me one day:

"'You much hungry, me good food.'

"In fact, he brought me an excellent fillet. Of what? We had neither beeves, sheep, goats, asses,

nor pigs. It was impossible for him to procure a horse. I reflected upon all this after having devoured my viand. Then, a terrible thought came to me. These negroes were born near a country where they ate men! And every day soldiers were falling all about them! I questioned Timbuctoo. He did not wish to say anything. I did not insist, but henceforth I ate no more of his presents.

"He adored me. One night the snow overtook us at the outposts. We were seated on the ground. I looked with pity upon the poor negroes shivering under this white, freezing powder. As I was very cold, I began to cough. Immediately, I felt something close around me like a great warm cover. It was Timbuctoo's mantle, which he had thrown around my shoulders.

"I arose and returned the garment to him, saying:

"'Keep it, my boy, you have more need of it than I.'

"He answered: 'No, no, my Lieutenant, for you, me not need, me hot, hot!'

"And he looked at me with suppliant eyes. I replied:

"'Come, obey, keep your mantle; I wish it.'

"The negro arose, drew his saber which he knew how to make cut like a scythe, held in the other the large cloak that I had refused and said:

"'So you not take mantle, me cut; no mantle.'

"He would have done it. I yielded.

* * * * * * *

"Eight days later we had capitulated. Some among us had been able to get away. The others

were going out of the town and giving themselves up to the conquerors.

"I directed my steps toward the Armory, where we were to reunite, when I met face to face a negro giant clothed in white duck and wearing a straw cap. It was Timbuctoo. He seemed radiant and walked along, his hands in his pockets, until we came to a little shop, where in the window there were two plates and two glasses.

"I asked him: 'What are you doing here?'

"He responded:

"'Me not suffer, me good cook, me make Colonel Algeie to eat, me feed Prussians, steal much, much.'

"The mercury stood at ten degrees. I shivered before this negro in white duck. Then he took me by the arm and made me enter. There I perceived a huge sign that he was going to hang up before his door as soon as I had gone out, for he had some modesty. I read, traced by the hand of some accomplice, these words:

"'MILITARY CUISINE OF M. TIMBUCTOO.
Formerly caterer to H. M. the Emperor. Paris Artist.
Prices Moderate.'

"In spite of the despair which was gnawing at my heart, I could not help laughing, and I left my negro to his new business. It would have availed nothing to have him taken prisoner.

"You see how he has succeeded, the rascal. Bézières to-day belongs to Germany. Timbuctoo's restaurant was the beginning of revenge."

MOHAMMED FRIPOULI

"SHALL we have our coffee on the roof?" asked the captain.

I answered:

"Yes, certainly."

He rose. It was already dark in the room which was lighted only by the interior court, after the fashion of Moorish houses. Before the high, ogive windows, convolvulus vines hung from the gnat terrace, where they passed the hot summer evenings. There only remained upon the table some grapes, big as plums, some fresh figs of a violet hue, some yellow pears, some long, plump bananas, and some Tougourt dates in a basket of *alfa*.

The Moor who waited on them opened the door and I went upstairs to the azure walls which received from above the soft light of the dying day.

And soon as I gave a deep sigh of happiness, on reaching the terrace. It overlooked Algiers, the harbor, the roadstead, and the distant shores.

The house, bought by the captain, was a former Arab residence, situated in the midst of the old city,

among those labyrinthine little streets, where swarm the strange population of the African coasts.

Beneath us, the flat, square roofs descended, like steps of giants, to the pointed roofs of the European quarter of the city. Behind these might be perceived the flags of the boats at anchor, then the sea, the open sea, blue and calm under the blue and calm sky.

We stretched ourselves upon the mats, our heads resting upon cushions, and while leisurely sipping the savory coffee of the locality, I gazed at the first stars in the dark azure. They were hardly perceptible, so far away, so pale as yet giving scarcely any light.

A light heat, a winged heat, caressed our skins. And at times the warm, heavy air, in which there was a vague odor, the odor of Africa, seemed the hot breath of the desert, coming over the peaks of Atlas. The captain, lying on his back, said:

"What a country, my dear boy! How soft life is here! How peculiar and delicious repose is in this land! How the nights seem to be made for dreams."

I looked at the stars coming out with a lazy, yet active, curiosity, with a drowsy happiness.

I murmured:

"You might tell me something of your life in the south."

Captain Marret was one of the oldest officers in the army of Africa, an officer of fortune, a former *spahi*, who had cut his way to his present rank.

Thanks to him, to his relations and friendships, I had been able to accomplish a superb trip to the desert, and I had come that evening to thank him before going to France.

He said: "What kind of a story do you want? I have had so many adventures during twelve years of sand, that I can't think of a single one." And I replied: "Well, tell me of the Arabian women." He did not reply. He remained stretched out with his arms bent, and his hands under his head, and I noticed at times the odor of his cigar, the smoke of which went straight up into the sky, so breezeless was the night.

And all of a sudden he began to laugh.

"Ah! yes, I'll tell you about a queer affair which occurred in my first days in Algeria.

"We had then in the army of Africa some extraordinary types, such as have not been seen since, types which would have amused you, so much in fact, that you would have wanted to spend all your life in this country.

"I was a simple *spahi,* a little *spahi,* twenty years old, light-haired, swaggering, supple, and strong. I was attached to a military command at Boghar. You know Boghar, which they call the balcony of the south. You have seen from the top of the fort the beginning of this land of fire, devoured, naked, tormented, stony, and red. It is really the antechamber to the desert, the broiling and superb frontier of the immense region of yellow solitudes.

"Well, there were forty of us *spahis* at Boghar, a company of *joyeux,* and a squadron of Chasseurs d'Afrique, when it was learned that the tribe of the Ouled-Berghi had assassinated an English traveler, come, no man knows how, into the country, for the English have the devil in their bodies.

"Punishment had to be given for the crime against a European; but the commanding officer hesitated at sending a column, thinking, in truth, that one Englishman wasn't worth so much of a movement.

"Now, as he was talking of this affair with the captain and the lieutenant, a quartermaster of *spahis* who was waiting for orders proposed all at once to go and punish the tribe if they would give him only six men. You know that in the south they are more free than in the city garrisons and there exists between officer and soldier a sort of comradeship which is not found elsewhere.

"The captain began to laugh:

"'You, my good man?'

"'Yes, captain, and if you desire it, I will bring you back the whole tribe as prisoners.'

"The commandant, who had fantastic ideas, took him at his word.

"'You will start to-morrow morning with six men of your own selection, and if you don't accomplish your purpose, look out for yourself.'

"The subofficer smiled in his mustache.

"'Fear nothing, commandant. My prisoners shall be here Wednesday noon at latest.'

"The quartermaster, Mohammed Fripouli, as he was called, was a Turk, a true Turk, who had entered the service of France, after a life which had been very much knocked about and not altogether too clean. He had traveled in many places, in Greece, in Asia Minor, in Egypt, in Palestine, and he had been forced to pay a good many forfeits on the way. He was an ex-Bashi-Bazouk, bold, ferocious, and gay, with the calm gaiety of the Oriental. He was

stout, very stout, but supple as a monkey and he rode a horse marvelously well. His mustache, incredibly thick and long, always aroused in me a confused idea of the crescent moon and a scimiter. He hated the Arabs with a deadly hatred, and he pursued them with frightful cruelty, continually inventing new tricks, calculated and terrible perfidies. He was possessed, too, of incredible strength and inconceivable audacity.

"The commandant said to him: 'Choose your men, my blade.'

"Mohammed took mė. He had confidence in me, the brave man, and I was grateful to him, body and soul, for this choice, which gave me as much pleasure as the Cross of Honor later.

"So we started the next morning, at dawn, all seven of us, and nobody else. My comrades were composed of those bandits, those plunderers, who, after marauding and playing the vagabond in all possible countries, finish by taking service in some foreign legion. Our army in Africa was then full of these rascals, excellent soldiers, but not at all scrupulous.

"Mohammed had given to each to carry ten pieces of rope about a meter in length. I was charged, besides as being the youngest and the least heavy, with a piece about a hundred meters long. When he was asked what he was going to do with all that rope, he answered with his sly and placid air:

"'It is to fish for the Arabs.'

"And he winked his eye mischievously, an action which he had learned from an old Chasseur d'Afrique from Paris.

"He marched in front of our squad, his head wrapped in a red turban, which he always wore in a campaign, and he smiled with cunning chuckles in his enormous mustache.

"He was truly handsome, this big Turk, with his powerful paunch, his shoulders of a colossus and his tranquil air. He rode a white horse of medium height, but strong; and the rider seemed ten times too big for his mount.

"We were passing through a long, dry ravine, bare and yellow, in the valley of the Chelif, and we talked of our expedition. My companions had all possible accents, there being among them a Spaniard, a Greek, an American, and two Frenchmen. As for Mohammed Fripouli, he spoke with an incredibly thick tongue.

"The sun, the terrible sun, the sun of the south, which no one knows anything about on the other side of the Mediterranean, fell upon our shoulders, and we advanced at a walk, as they always do in that country.

"All day we marched without meeting a tree or an Arab.

"Toward one o'clock in the afternoon, we had eaten, near a little spring which flowed between the rocks, the bread and dried mutton which we had brought in our knapsacks; then after twenty minutes' rest, went out again on our way.

"Toward six o'clock in the evening, finally, after a long detour which our leader had forced us to make, we discovered behind a knob, a tribe encamped. The brown, low tents made dark spots on the yellow earth, looking like great mushrooms

growing at the foot of this red hill which was burned by the sun.

"They were our game. A little further away, on the edge of a meadow of *alfa* of a dark green color, the tied horses were pasturing.

"'Gallop!' ordered Mohammed, and we arrived like a whirlwind in the midst of the camp. The women, terrified, covered with white rags which hung floating upon them, ran quickly to their canvas huts, cringing and crouching and crying like hunted beasts. The men, on the contrary, came from all sides to defend themselves. We struck right for the tallest tent, that of the *agha*.

"We kept our sabers in the scabbards, after the example of Mohammed, who galloped in a singular fashion. He sat absolutely motionless, erect upon his small horse, which strove under him madly to carry such a weight. And the tranquillity of the rider with his long mustache contracted strangely with the liveliness of the animal.

"The native chief came out of his tent as we arrived before it. He was a tall, thin man, dark, with a gleaming eye, full forehead, and arched eyebrows.

"He cried in Arabic:

"'What do you want?'

"Mohammed, stopping his horse short, replied in his language: 'Was it you who killed the English traveler?'

"The *agha* said in a strong voice:

"'I am not going to be examined by you!'

"There was around us, as it were, a rumbling tempest. The Arabs ran up from all sides, pressing and surrounding us, all the time vociferating loudly.

"They had the air of ferocious birds of prey, with their big curved noses, their thin faces with high cheek-bones, their flowing garments, agitated by their gestures.

"Mohammed smiled, his turban crooked, his eye excited, and I saw shivers of pleasure on his cheeks which were pendulous, fleshy, and wrinkled.

"He replied in a thunderous voice:

"'Death to him who has given death!'

"And he pointed his revolver at the brown face of the *agha*. I saw a little smoke leap from the muzzle; then a red foam of blood and brains spurted from the forehead of the chief. He fell, like a block, on his back, spreading out his arms, which lifted like wings the folds of his burnous.

"Truly, I thought my last day had come, such a terrible tumult rose about us.

"Mohammed had drawn his saber. We unsheathed ours, like him. He cried, whirling away the men, who were pressing him the closest:

"'Life to those who submit. Death to all others.'

"And seizing the nearest in his herculean grasp, he dragged him to his saddle, tied his hands, yelling to us:

"'Do as I, and saber those who resist.'

"In five minutes, we had captured twenty Arabs, whose wrists we securely bound. Then we pursued the fleeing ones, for there had been a perfect rout around us at the sight of the naked sabers. We captured about twenty more men.

"Over all the plains might be seen white objects which were running. The women were dragging along their children and uttering piercing cries. The

yellow dogs, like jackals, barked around us, and showed us their white fangs.

"Mohammed, who seemed mad with joy, leaped from his horse at a bound and seizing the cord which I had brought:

"'Attention!' he cried, 'two men to the ground.'

"Then he made a terrible and peculiar thing—a string of prisoners, or rather a string of hanged men. He had firmly tied the two wrists of the first captive, then he made a running knot around his neck with the same cord, which bound again the arm of the next and twisted it around his neck. Our fifty prisoners soon found themselves fastened in such a way that the slightest movement of one to flee would strangle him as well as his two neighbors. Every gesture they made pulled on the noose around their necks, and they had to march with the same step with but a pace separating from one another, under the penalty of falling immediately, like a hare in a snare.

"When this strange deed was done, Mohammed began to laugh, with his silent laughter, which shook his stomach without a sound leaving his mouth.

"'That's an Arabian chain.' said he.

"We began to twist and turn before the terrified and piteous faces of the prisoners.

"'Now,' cried our chief, 'at each end fix me that.'

"A stake was fastened at each end of this ribbon of white-clad captives, like phantoms, who stood motionless as if they had been changed into stones.

"'Now, let us dine!' said the Turk. A fire was made and a sheep was cooked, which we ate with our fingers. Then we had some dates which we

found in the trees; drank some milk obtained in the Arab tents; and we picked up a few silver trinkets forgotten by the fugitives. We were tranquilly finishing our repast, when I perceived, on the hill opposite, a singular gathering. It was the women who had just now fled, nothing but women. They came running toward us. I pointed them out to Mohammed Fripouli.

"He smiled:

"'It is the dessert!' said he.

"'Ah! yes! the dessert.'

"They approached, running like mad women, and soon we were peppered with stones which they hurled at us without stopping their pace; then we saw that they were armed with knives, tent stakes, and old utensils.

"'To horse!' cried Mohammed. It was time. The attack was terrible. They came to free the prisoners and tried to cut the rope. The Turk, understanding the danger, became furious and shouted: 'Saber them! Saber them! Saber them!' And as we stood motionless, disturbed by this new kind of charge, hesitating at killing women, he threw himself upon the advancing band.

"He charged all alone, this battalion of women, in tatters, and he began to saber them, the wretch, like a madman, with such rage and fury, that a white body might be seen to fall at every stroke of his arm.

"He was so terrible, that the women, terrified, fled as quickly as they had come, leaving on the ground a dozen dead and wounded, whose crimson blood stained their white garments.

"And Mohammed, frowning, turned toward us, exclaiming:

"'Start, start, my sons! They will come back.'

"And we beat a retreat, conducting at a slow step our prisoners, who were paralyzed by fear of strangulation.

"The next day, noon struck as we arrived at Boghar with our chain of hanged men. Only six died on the way. But it had often been necessary to loosen the knots from one end of the convoy to the other, for every shock half strangled ten captives at once."

The captain was silent. I did not say anything in reply. I thought of the strange country where such things could be seen and I gazed at the innumerable and shining flock of stars in the dark sky.

"BELL"

HE HAD known better days, in spite of his misery and infirmity. At the age of fifteen, he had had both legs cut off by a carriage on the highway near Varville. Since that time he had begged, dragging himself along the roads, across farmyards, balanced upon his crutches which brought his shoulders to the height of his ears. His head seemed sunk between two mountains.

Found as an infant in a ditch by the curate of Billettes, on the morning of All Souls' day, he was, for this reason, baptized Nicholas Toussaint (All Saints); brought up by charity, he was a stranger to all instruction; crippled from having drunk several glasses of brandy offered him by the village baker, for the sake of a laughable story, and since then a vagabond, knowing how to do nothing but hold out his hand.

Formerly, Baroness d'Avary gave him a kind of kennel full of straw beside her poultry-house, to sleep in, on the farm adjoining her castle; and he was sure, in days of great hunger, of always finding a piece of

bread and a glass of cider in the kitchen. He often received a few sous, also, thrown by the old lady from her steps or her chamber window. Now she was dead.

In the villages, they gave him scarcely anything. They knew him too well. They were tired of him, having seen his little, deformed body on the two wooden legs going from house to house for the last forty years. And he went there because it was the only corner of the country that he knew on the face of the earth—these three or four hamlets where he dragged out his miserable life. He had tried the frontier for his begging, but had never passed the boundaries, for he was not accustomed to anything new.

He did not even know whether the world extended beyond the trees which had always limited his vision. He had never asked. And when the peasants, tired of meeting him in their fields or along their ditches, cried out to him: "Why do you not go to some other villages, in place of always stumping about here?" he did not answer, but took himself off, seized by a vague and unknown fear, that fear of the poor who dread a thousand things, confusedly,—new faces, injuries, suspicious looks from people whom they do not know, the police, who patrol the roads in twos, and make a plunge at them, by instinct, in the bushes or behind a heap of stones.

When he saw them from afar, shining in the sun, he suddenly developed a singular agility, the agility of a wild animal to reach his lair. He tumbled along on his crutches, letting himself fall like a bundle of rags and rolling along like a ball, becoming so small

as to be almost invisible, keeping close as a hare running for covert, mingling his brown tatters with the earth. He had, however, never had any trouble with them. But this fear and this slyness were in his blood, as if he had received them from his parents whom he had never seen.

He had no refuge, no roof, no hut, no shelter. He slept anywhere in summer, and in winter he slipped under the barns or into the stables with a remarkable adroitness. He always got out before anyone was aware of his presence. He knew all the holes in the buildings that could be penetrated; and, manipulating his crutches with a surprising vigor, using them as arms, he would sometimes crawl, by the sole strength of his wrists, into the hay-barns, where he would remain four or five days without budging, when he had gathered together sufficient provisions for his needs.

He lived like the animals in the woods, in the midst of men without knowing anyone, without loving anyone, and exciting in the peasants only a kind of indifferent scorn and resigned hostility. They nicknamed him "Bell," because he balanced himself between his two wooden pegs like a bell between its two standards.

For two days he had had nothing to eat. No one would give him anything. They would, now, have nothing more to do with him. The peasants in their doors, seeing him coming, would cry out to him from afar:

"You want to get away from here, now. 'Twas only three days ago that I gave you a piece of bread!"

And he would turn about on his props and go on to a neighboring house, where he would be received in the same fashion.

The women declared, from one door to another:

"One cannot feed that vagabond the year round."

Nevertheless, the vagabond had need of food every day. He had been through Saint-Hilaire, Varville, and Billettes without receiving a centime or a crust of bread. Tournolles remained as his only hope; but to reach it he must walk two leagues upon the highway, and he felt too weary to drag himself along, his stomach being as empty as his pocket.

He set out on the way, nevertheless.

It was December, and a cold wind blew over the fields, whistling among the bare branches. The clouds galloped across the low, somber sky, hastening one knew not where. The cripple went slowly, placing one support before the other with wearisome effort, balancing himself upon the part of a leg that remained to him, which terminated in a wooden foot bound about with rags.

From time to time he sat down by a ditch and rested for some minutes. Hunger gave him a distress of soul, confused and heavy. He had but one idea: "to eat." But he knew not by what means.

For three hours he toiled along the road; then, when he perceived the trees of the village, he hastened his movements.

The first peasant he met, of whom he asked alms, responded to him:

"You here yet, you old customer? I wonder if we are ever going to get rid of you!"

And Bell took himself away. From door to door he was treated harshly, and sent away without receiving anything. He continued his journey, however, patient and obstinate. He received not one sou.

Then he visited the farms, picking his way across ground made moist by the rains, so spent that he could scarcely raise his crutches. They chased him away, everywhere. It was one of those cold, sad days when the heart shrivels, the mind is irritated, the soul is somber, and the hand does not open to give or to aid.

When he had finished the rounds of all the houses he knew, he went and threw himself down by a ditch which ran along by M. Chiquet's yard. He unhooked himself, as one might say to express how he let himself fall from between his two high crutches, letting them slip along his arms. And he remained motionless for a long time, tortured by hunger, but too stupid to well understand his unfathomable misery.

He awaited he knew not what, with that vague expectation which ever dwells in us. He awaited, in the corner of that yard, under a freezing wind for that mysterious aid which one always hopes will come from heaven or mankind, without asking how, or why, or through whom it can arrive.

A flock of black hens passed him, seeking their living from the earth which nourishes all beings. Every moment they picked up a grain or an invisible insect, then continued their search slowly, but surely.

Bell looked at them without thinking of anything; then there came to him — to his stomach rather than to his mind — the idea, or rather the

sensation, that these animals were good to eat when roasted over a fire of dry wood.

The suspicion that he would be committing a robbery only touched him slightly. He took a stone which lay at his hand and, as he had skill in this way, killed neatly the one nearest him that was approaching. The bird fell on its side, moving its wings. The others fled, half balanced upon their thin legs, and Bell, climbing again upon his crutches, began to run after them, his movements much like that of the hens.

When he came to the little black body, touched with red on the head, he received a terrible push in the back, which threw him loose from his supports and sent him rolling ten steps ahead of them. And M. Chiquet, exasperated, threw himself upon the marauder, rained blows upon him, striking him like a madman, as a robbed peasant strikes, with his fist and his knee, upon all the infirm body which could not defend itself.

The people of the farm soon arrived and began to help their master beat the beggar. Then, when they were tired of beating, they picked him up, carried him, and shut him up in the woodhouse while they went to get a policeman.

Bell, half dead, bloody, and dying of hunger, lay still upon the ground. The evening came, then the night, and then the dawn. He had had nothing to eat.

Toward noon, the policemen appeared, opening the door with precaution as if expecting resistance, for M. Chiquet pretended that he had been attacked by robbers against whom he had defended himself with great difficulty.

The policeman cried out:

"Come there, now! stand up!"

But Bell could no longer move, although he did try to hoist himself upon his sticks. They believed this a feint, a sly ruse for the purpose of doing some mischief, and the two men handled him roughly, standing him up and planting him by force upon his crutches.

And fear had seized him, that native fear of the yellow long-belt, that fear of the Newgate-bird before the detective, of the mouse before the cat. And, by superhuman effort, he succeeded in standing.

"March!" said the policeman. And he marched. All the employees of the farm watched him as he went. The women shook their fists at him; the men sneered at and threatened him. They had got him, finally! Good riddance.

He went away between the two guardians of the peace. He found energy enough in his desperation to enable him to drag himself along until evening, when he was completely stupefied, no longer knowing what had happened, too bewildered to comprehend anything.

The people that he met stopped to look at him in passing, and the peasants murmured:

"So that is the 'robber'!"

They came toward nightfall to the chief town in the district. He had never been seen there. He did not exactly understand what was taking place, nor what was likely to take place. All these frightful, unheard-of things, these faces and these new houses, filled him with consternation.

He did not say a word, having nothing to say, because he comprehended nothing. Besides, he had

not talked to anybody for so many years that he had almost lost the use of his tongue; and his thoughts were always too confused to formulate into words.

They shut him up in the town prison. The policemen did not think he needed anything to eat, and they left him until the next day.

When they went to question him, in the early morning, they found him dead upon the ground. Surprise seized them!

THE VICTIM

THE north wind whistled in a tempest, carrying through the sky the enormous winter clouds, heavy and black, which threw, in passing, furious rain-bursts over the earth.

A heavy sea moaned and shook the coast, hurrying upon the shore enormous waves, slow and dribbling, which rolled with the noise of artillery. They come in slowly, one after the other, as high as mountains, scattering from their heads in the wind the white foam that seems like the sweat of monsters.

The tempest rushed into the little valley of Yport, whistling and groaning, whirling the slates from the roofs, breaking down fortifications, knocking over chimneys, darting through the streets in such gusts that one could not walk there without keeping close to the walls, and lifting up children like leaves and throwing them into the fields beyond the houses.

They had brought the fishing boats to land, for fear of the sea which would sweep the whole coast at full tide, and some sailors, concealed behind the round wall of the breakwater, lay on their sides watching the anger of the heavens and the sea.

Then they went away, little by little, because night fell upon the tempest, enveloping in shadow the excited ocean and all the disturbance of the elements in fury.

Two men still remained, their hands in their pockets, with back rounded under a sudden squall, woolen caps drawn down to the eyes, two great Norman fishermen, with rough beards for collars, with skin browned by the salt winds of the open sea, with blue eyes pricked out in the middle in a black dot, the piercing eyes of mariners who see to the end of the horizon like birds of prey.

One of them said:

"Come, let us go, Jeremy. We will pass the time at dominoes. I will pay."

The other still hesitated, tempted by the game and the drink, knowing well that he would get drunk if he went into Paumelle's and held back by the thought of his wife at home alone in their hovel.

He remarked: "It looks as if you had made a bet to get me tipsy every night. Tell me, what's the object, since you always pay?"

And he laughed at all the brandy he had drunk at the expense of the other, laughed with the contented laugh of a Norman who has the best of it.

Mathurin, his comrade, kept pulling him by the arm. "Come," he would say, "come, Jeremy. It is not the evening to go home without anything

warm on the inside. What are you afraid of? Your wife will warm the bed for you!"

Jeremy responded: "Only the other evening I couldn't find the door—they almost had to go fishing for me in the brook in front of our house!"

And he laughed still at the memory of this vagary and went patiently toward Paumelle's *café*, where the illuminated glass shone brilliantly. He went, drawn along by Mathurin and pushed by the wind, incapable of resisting these two forces.

The low hall was filled with sailors, smoke, and noise. All the men, clothed in wool, their elbows on the table, were talking in loud voices to make themselves heard. The more drinkers that entered, the more was it necessary to howl into the uproar of voices and of dominoes hitting against the marble, with an attempt to make more noise still.

Jeremy and Mathurin seated themselves in a corner and commenced a game, and little glasses disappeared, one after another, into the depth of their throats.

Then they played other games and drank more glasses. Mathurin always turned and winked an eye to the proprietor, a large man as red as fire, and who laughed as if he knew about some good farce; and Jeremy guzzled the alcohol, balanced his head, uttered roars of laughter, looking at his companion with a stupid, contented air.

Finally, all the clients were going. And, each time that one of them opened the door to go out, a blast entered the *café*, driving in a whirlwind the smoke of the pipes, swinging the lamps to the end of their chains and making their flames dance.

And they could hear suddenly the profound shock of an in-rolling wave, and the moaning of the squall.

Jeremy, his clothing loosened at the neck, took the pose of a tipsy man, one leg extended, one arm falling, while in the other hand he held his dominoes.

They were alone now with the proprietor, who approached them full of interest. He asked:

"Well, Jeremy, how goes it in the interior? Are you refreshed with all this sprinkling?"

And Jeremy muttered: "Since it slipped down —makes it dry in there."

The *café* keeper looked at Mathurin with a sly air. Then he asked:

"And your brother, Mathurin, where is he at this hour?"

The sailor answered with a quiet laugh:

"Where it is warm; don't you worry."

And the two looked at Jeremy who triumphantly put down the double six announcing:

"There! the syndic."

When they had finished the game, the proprietor declared:

"You know, my lads, I must put up the shutters. But I will leave you a lamp and a bottle. There's twenty sous left for it. You will shut the outside door, Mathurin, and slip the key under the step as you did the other night."

Mathurin answered: "Don't you worry. I understand."

Paumelle shook hands with both his tardy clients, and mounted heavily his wooden staircase. For some

minutes his heavy step resounded in the little house; then a loud creaking announced that he had put himself in bed.

The two men continued to play; from time to time a more violent rage of the tempest shook the door, making the walls tremble, and the two men would raise their heads as if some one was about to enter. Then Mathurin took the bottle and filled Jeremy's glass.

Suddenly, the clock, suspended over the counter, sounded midnight. Its hoarse ring resembled a crash of pans and the blows vibrated a long time, with the resonance of old iron.

Mathurin immediately rose, like a sailor whose quart is finished. He said:

"Come, Jeremy, we must break off."

The other put himself in motion with more difficulty, got his equilibrium by leaning against the table; then he reached the door and opened it, while his companion extinguished the light.

When they were in the street, and Mathurin had locked the door, he said:

"Well, good night, till to-morrow."

And he disappeared into the shadows.

Jeremy took three steps, extended his hands, met a wall which held him up, and then began to walk along stumblingly. Sometimes, a gust rushing through the straight street, threw him forward, making him run for some steps; then when the violence of the wind ceased, he would stop short, and having lost his poise, begin to vacillate upon the capricious legs of a drunken man.

He went, by instinct, toward his dwelling, as birds fly to their nests. Finally, he recognized his door and began to fumble to find the keyhole, to place his key in it. He could not find it, and swore in an undertone. Then he struck upon it with his fist, calling his wife to come and aid him:

"Melina! Eh! Melina!"

As he leaned against the door in order not to fall, it yielded, flew open, and Jeremy, losing his balance, entered his house in a tumble, then rolled upon his nose into the room; he felt that something heavy had passed over his body and then fled into the night.

He did not move, perplexed with fright, astonished, in the devil of a fright, from the spirits of all the mysterious and shadowy things, and he waited a long time without daring to make a sound. But, as he saw that nothing more moved, a little reason came back to him, the troubled reason of vagary.

And he slowly sat up. Then he waited still a long time and finally said:

"Melina!"

His wife did not answer.

Then, suddenly, a doubt went through his obscure brain, a wavering doubt, a vague suspicion. He did not move; he remained there, seated on the floor in the dark, gathering his ideas, clutching his reflections as incomplete and uncertain as his legs.

He called again:

"Tell me who it was, Melina, tell me who it was. I will do nothing to you."

He waited. No voice came out of the shadow. He reasoned out loud now:

"I am drunk—all same! I am drunk! He made me drink like this now! He kept me from coming back home. I am drunk!"

Then he repeated: "Tell me who it was, Melina, or I'm going to do harm."

After having waited again, he continued, with the slow and obstinate logic of an intoxicated man:

"It was him kept me at that lazy Paumelle's; and other evenings too, so I couldn't come home. He's some 'complice. Ah! carrion!"

Slowly he got up on his knees. A sudden anger helped him, mingling with the fermentation of the drink. He repeated:

"Tell me who it was, Melina, or I'm going to beat you; I give you warning."

He was standing now, trembling with anger, as if the alcohol which he had in his body was inflamed in his veins. He took a step, hit against a chair, seized it, walked to the bed, touched it, and felt there the warm body of his wife.

Then, excited with rage, he cried:

"Ah! there you are, filth, and you wouldn't answer."

And, raising the chair which he held in his robust sailor's fist, he brought it down before him with exasperated fury. A scream arose from the bed; a terrified, piercing cry. Then he began to beat like a thrasher in a barn. Nothing moved now. The chair was broken in pieces. One leg remained in his hand and he hit with it until he gasped.

Then suddenly he stopped and asked:

"Will you tell me who it was, now?"

Melina did not answer.

Then, worn out with fatigue and stupid from his violence, he sat down again upon the floor, fell over, and was asleep.

When the day appeared, a neighbor, seeing the door open, entered. He perceived Jeremy snoring upon the floor, where lay the *débris* of a chair, and on the bed a pulp of flesh and blood.

THE ENGLISHMAN

THEY made a circle around Judge Bermutier, who was giving his opinion of the mysterious affair that had happened at Saint-Cloud. For a month Paris had doted on this inexplicable crime. No one could understand it at all.

M. Bermutier, standing with his back to the chimney, talked about it, discussed the divers opinions, but came to no conclusions.

Many women had risen and come nearer, remaining standing, with eyes fixed upon the shaven mouth of the magistrate, whence issued these grave words. They shivered and vibrated, crisp through their curious fear, through that eager, insatiable need of terror which haunts their soul, torturing them like a hunger.

One of them, paler than the others, after a silence, said:

"It is frightful. It touches the supernatural. We shall never know anything about it."

The magistrate turned toward her, saying:

"Yes, Madame, it is probable that we never shall know anything about it. As for the word 'supernatural,' when you come to use that, it has no place here. We are in the presence of a crime skillfully conceived, very skillfully executed, and so well enveloped in mystery that we cannot separate the impenetrable circumstances which surround it. But, once in my life, I had to follow an affair which seemed truly to be mixed up with something very unusual. However, it was necessary to give it up, as there was no means of explaining it."

Many of the ladies called out at the same time, so quickly that their voices sounded as one:

"Oh! tell us about it."

M. Bermutier smiled gravely, as judges should, and replied:

"You must not suppose, for an instant, that I, at least, believed there was anything superhuman in the adventure. I believe only in normal causes. And, if in place of using the word 'supernatural' to express what we cannot comprehend we should simply use the word 'inexplicable,' it would be much better. In any case, the surrounding circumstances in the affair I am going to relate to you, as well as the preparatory circumstances, have affected me much. Here are the facts:

"I was then Judge of Instruction at Ajaccio, a little white town lying on the border of an admirable gulf that was surrounded on all sides by high mountains.

"What I particularly had to look after there was the affairs of *vendetta*. Some of them were superb; as dramatic as possible, ferocious, and heroic. We find there the most beautiful subjects of vengeance

that one could dream of, hatred a century old, appeased for a moment but never extinguished, abominable plots, assassinations becoming massacres and almost glorious battles. For two years I heard of nothing but the price of blood, of the terribly prejudiced Corsican who is bound to avenge all injury upon the person of him who is the cause of it, or upon his nearest descendants. I saw old men and infants, cousins, with their throats cut, and my head was full of these stories.

"One day we learned that an Englishman had rented for some years a little villa at the end of the Gulf. He had brought with him a French domestic, picked up at Marseilles on the way.

"Soon everybody was occupied with this singular person, who lived alone in his house, only going out to hunt and fish. He spoke to no one, never came to the town, and, every morning, practiced shooting with a pistol and a rifle for an hour or two.

"Some legends about him were abroad. They pretended that he was a high personage fled from his own country for political reasons; then they affirmed that he was concealing himself after having committed a frightful crime. They even cited some of the particularly horrible details.

"In my capacity of judge, I wished to get some information about this man. But it was impossible to learn anything. He called himself Sir John Rowell.

"I contented myself with watching him closely; although, in reality, there seemed nothing to suspect regarding him.

"Nevertheless, as rumors on his account continued, grew, and became general, I resolved to try and see

this stranger myself, and for this purpose began to hunt regularly in the neighborhood of his property.

"I waited long for an occasion. It finally came in the form of a partridge which I shot and killed before the very nose of the Englishman. My dog brought it to me; but, immediately taking it I went and begged Sir John Rowell to accept the dead bird, excusing myself for intrusion.

"He was a tall man with red hair and red beard, very large, a sort of placid, polite Hercules. He had none of the so-called British haughtiness, and heartily thanked me for the delicacy in French, with a beyond-the-Channel accent. At the end of a month we had chatted together five or six times.

"Finally, one evening, as I was passing by his door, I perceived him astride a chair in the garden, smoking his pipe. I saluted him and he asked me in to have a glass of beer. It was not necessary for him to repeat before I accepted.

"He received me with the fastidious courtesy of the English, spoke in praise of France and of Corsica, and declared that he loved that country and that shore.

"Then, with great precaution in the form of a lively interest, I put some questions to him about his life and his projects. He responded without embarrassment, told me that he had traveled much, in Africa, in the Indies, and in America. He added, laughing:

"'I have had many adventures, oh! yes.'

"I began to talk about hunting, and he gave me many curious details of hunting the hippopotamus, the tiger, the elephant, and even of hunting the gorilla.

"I said: 'All these animals are very formidable.'

"He laughed: 'Oh! no. The worst animal is man.' Then he began to laugh, with the hearty laugh of a big contented Englishman. He continued:

"'I have often hunted man, also.'

"He spoke of weapons and asked me to go into his house to see his guns of various makes and kinds.

"His drawing-room was hung in black, in black silk embroidered with gold. There were great yellow flowers running over the somber stuff, shining like fire.

"'It is Japanese cloth,' he said.

"But in the middle of a large panel, a strange thing attracted my eye. Upon a square of red velvet, a black object was attached. I approached and found it was a hand, the hand of a man. Not a skeleton hand, white and characteristic, but a black, desiccated hand, with yellow joints with the muscles bare and on them traces of old blood, of blood that seemed like a scale, over the bones sharply cut off at about the middle of the fore-arm, as with a blow of a hatchet. About the wrist was an enormous iron chain, riveted, soldered to this unclean member, attaching it to the wall by a ring sufficiently strong to hold an elephant.

"I asked: 'What is that?'

"The Englishman responded tranquilly:

"'It belonged to my worst enemy. It came from America. It was broken with a saber, cut off with a sharp stone, and dried in the sun for eight days. Oh, very good for me, that was!'

"I touched the human relic, which must have belonged to a colossus. The fingers were immoderately

long and attached by enormous tendons that held the straps of skin in place. This dried hand was frightful to see, making one think, naturally, of the vengeance of a savage.

"I said: 'This man must have been very strong.'

"With gentleness the Englishman answered:

"'Oh! yes; but I was stronger than he. I put this chain on him to hold him.'

"I thought he spoke in jest and replied:

"'The chain is useless now that the hand cannot escape.'

"Sir John Rowell replied gravely: 'It always wishes to escape. The chain is necessary.'

"With a rapid, questioning glance, I asked myself: 'Is he mad, or is that an unpleasant joke?'

"But the face remained impenetrable, tranquil, and friendly. I spoke of other things and admired the guns.

"Nevertheless, I noticed three loaded revolvers on the pieces of furniture, as if this man lived in constant fear of attack.

"I went there many times after that; then for some time I did not go. We had become accustomed to his presence; he had become indifferent to us.

"A whole year slipped away. Then, one morning, toward the end of November, my domestic awoke me with the announcement that Sir John Rowell had been assassinated in the night.

"A half hour later, I entered the Englishman's house with the central Commissary and the Captain of Police. The servant, lost in despair, was weeping at

the door. I suspected him at first, but afterward found that he was innocent.

"The guilty one could never be found.

"Upon entering Sir John's drawing-room, I perceived his dead body stretched out upon its back, in the middle of the room. His waistcoat was torn, a sleeve was hanging, and it was evident that a terrible struggle had taken place.

"The Englishman had been strangled! His frightfully black and swollen face seemed to express an abominable fear; he held something between his set teeth; and his neck, pierced with five holes apparently done with a pointed iron, was covered with blood.

"A doctor joined us. He examined closely the prints of fingers in the flesh and pronounced these strange words:

"'One would think he had been strangled by a skeleton.'

"A shiver ran down my back and I cast my eyes to the place on the wall where I had seen the horrible, torn-off hand. It was no longer there. The chain was broken and hanging.

"Then I bent over the dead man and found in his mouth a piece of one of the fingers of the missing hand, cut off, or rather sawed off by the teeth exactly at the second joint.

"Then they tried to collect evidence. They could find nothing. No door had been forced, no window opened, or piece of furniture moved. The two watch-dogs on the premises had not been aroused.

"Here, in a few words, is the deposition of the servant:

"For a month, his master had seemed agitated. He had received many letters which he had burned immediately. Often, taking a whip, in anger which seemed like dementia, he had struck in fury, this dried hand, fastened to the wall and taken, one knew not how, at the moment of a crime.

"He had retired late and shut himself in with care. He always carried arms. Often in the night he talked out loud, as if he were quarreling with some one. On that night, however, there had been no noise, and it was only on coming to open the windows that the servant had found Sir John assassinated. He suspected no one.

"I communicated what I knew of the death to the magistrates and public officers, and they made minute inquiries upon the whole island. They discovered nothing.

"One night, three months after the crime, I had a frightful nightmare. It seemed to me that I saw that hand, that horrible hand, running like a scorpion or a spider along my curtains and my walls. Three times I awoke, three times I fell asleep and again saw that hideous relic galloping about my room, moving its fingers like paws.

"The next day they brought it to me, found in the cemetery upon the tomb where Sir John Rowell was interred—for they had not been able to find his family. The index finger was missing.

"This, ladies, is my story. I know no more about it."

The ladies were terrified, pale, and shivering. One of them cried:

"But that is not the end, for there was no explanation! We cannot sleep if you do not tell us what was your idea of the reason of it all."

The magistrate smiled with severity, and answered:

"Oh! certainly, ladies, but it will spoil all your terrible dreams. I simply think that the legitimate proprietor of the hand was not dead and that he came for it with the one that remained to him. But I was never able to find out how he did it. It was one kind of revenge."

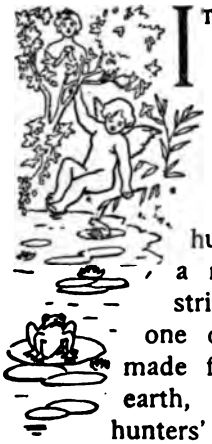
One of the women murmured:

"No, it could not be thus."

And the Judge of Information, smiling still, concluded:

"I told you in the beginning that my explanation would not satisfy you."

SENTIMENT



It was during the hunting season, at the country seat of the De Bannevilles. The autumn was rainy and dull. The red leaves, instead of crackling under foot, rotted in the hollows after the heavy showers.

The forest, almost leafless, was as humid as a bath-room. There was a moldy odor under the great trees, stripped of their fruits, which enveloped one on entering, as if a lye had been made from the steeped herbs, the soaked earth, and the continuous rainfall. The hunters' ardor was dampened, the dogs were sullen, their tails lowered and their hair matted against their sides, while the young huntresses, their habits drenched with rain, returned each evening depressed in body and spirit.

In the great drawing-room, after dinner, they played lotto, but without enthusiasm, as the wind made a clattering noise upon the shutters and forced the old weather vanes into a spinning-top tournament. Some one suggested telling stories, as they are told

in books; but no one could think of anything very amusing. The hunters narrated some of their adventures with the gun, the slaughter of wolves, for example; and the ladies racked their brains without finding anywhere the imagination of Scheherazade.

They were about to abandon this form of diversion, when a young lady, carelessly playing with the hand of her old, unmarried aunt, noticed a little ring made of blond hair, which she had often seen before but thought nothing about.

Moving it gently about the finger she said, suddenly: "Tell us the history of this ring, Auntie; it looks like the hair of a child—"

The old maiden reddened and then grew pale, then in a trembling voice she replied: "It is sad, so sad that I never care to speak about it. All the unhappiness of my life is centered in it. I was young then, but the memory of it remains so painful that I weep whenever I think of it."

They wished very much to hear the story, but the aunt refused to tell it; finally, they urged so much that she at length consented.

"You have often heard me speak of the Santèze family, now extinct. I knew the last three men of this family. They all died within three months in the same manner. This hair belonged to the last one. He was thirteen years old, when he killed himself for me. That appears very strange to you, doesn't it?

"It was a singular race, a race of fools, if you will, but of charming fools, of fools for love. All, from father to son, had these violent passions, waves of emotion which drove them to deeds most exalted,

to fanatical devotion, and even to crime. Devotion was to them what it is to certain religious souls. Those who become monks are not of the same nature as drawing-room favorites. One might almost say, as a proverb, 'He loved like a Santèze.'

"To see them was to divine this characteristic. They all had curly hair, growing low upon the brow, beard crinkly, eyes large, very large, whose rays seemed to penetrate and disturb you, without your knowing just why.

"The grandfather of the one of whom this is the only souvenir, after many adventures, and some duels on account of entanglements with women, when toward sixty, became passionately taken with the daughter of his farmer. I knew them both. She was blond, pale, distinguished looking, with a soft voice and a sweet look, so sweet that she reminded one of a madonna. The old lord took her home with him, and immediately became so captivated that he was unable to pass a minute away from her. His daughter and his daughter-in-law who lived in the house, found this perfectly natural, so much was love a tradition of the family. When one was moved by a great passion, nothing surprised them, and, if anyone expressed a different notion before them, of disunited lovers, or revenge after some treachery, they would both say, in the same desolate voice: 'Oh! how he (or she) must have suffered before coming to that!' Nothing more. They were moved with pity by all dramas of the heart and never spoke slightingly of them, even when they were unworthy.

"One autumn, a young man, M. de Gradelle, invited for the hunting, eloped with the young woman.

"M. de Santèze remained calm, as if nothing had happened. But one morning they found him in the kennel in the midst of the dogs.

"His son died in the same fashion, in a hotel in Paris, while on a journey in 1841, after having been deceived by an opera singer.

"He left a child of eleven years, and a widow, the sister of my mother. She came with the little one to live at my father's house, on the De Bertillon estate. I was then seventeen.

"You could not imagine what an astonishing, precocious child this little Santèze was. One would have said that all the powers of tenderness, all the exaltation of his race had fallen upon this one, the last. He was always dreaming and walking alone in a great avenue of elms that led from the house to the woods. I often watched this sentimental youngster from my window, as he walked up and down with his hands behind his back, with bowed head, sometimes stopping to look up, as if he saw and comprehended things beyond his age and experience.

"Often after dinner, on clear nights, he would say to me: 'Let us go and dream, Cousin.' And we would go together into the park. He would stop abruptly in the clear spaces, where the white vapor floats, that soft light with which the moon lights up the clearings in the woods, and say to me, seizing my hand: 'Look! Look there! But you do not understand, I feel it. If you comprehended, you would be happy. One must know how to love.' I would laugh and embrace him, this boy, who loved me until his dying day.

"Often, too, after dinner, he would seat himself upon my mother's knee. 'Come, Aunt,' he would say to her, 'tell us some love story.' And my mother, for his pleasure, would tell him all the family legends, the passionate adventures of his fathers, as they had been told a thousand times, true and false. It is these stories that have ruined these men; they never concealed anything, and prided themselves upon not allowing a descendant of their house to lie

"He would be uplifted, this little one, by these terrible or affecting tales, and sometimes he would clap his hands and cry out: 'I, too; I, too, know how to love, better than any of them.'

"Then he began to pay me his court; a timid, profoundly tender devotion, so droll that one could but laugh at it. Each morning I had flowers picked by him, and each evening, before going to his room, he would kiss my hand, murmuring: 'I love you!'

"I was guilty, very guilty, and I have wept since, unceasingly, doing penance all my life, by remaining an old maid—or rather, an affianced widow, his widow. I amused myself with this childish devotion, even inciting him. I was coquettish, enticing as if he were a man, caressing and deceiving. I excited this child. It was a joke to me, and a pleasing diversion to his mother and mine. He was eleven years old! Think of it! Who would have taken seriously this passion of a midget! I kissed him as much as he wished. I even wrote sweet letters to him that our mothers read. And he responded with letters of fire, that I still have. He had a belief all his own in our intimacy and love, judging himself a man. We had forgotten that he was a Santèze!

"This lasted nearly a year. One evening, in the park, he threw himself down at my knees, kissing the hem of my dress, with furious earnestness, repeating: 'I love you! I love you! I love you! and shall, even to death. If you ever deceive me, understand, if you ever leave me for another, I shall do as my father did—' And he added in a low voice that gave one the shivers: 'You know what I shall do!'

"Then, as I remained amazed and dumfounded, he got up and, stretching himself on tiptoe, for I was much taller than he, he repeated in my ear, my name, my first name, 'Genevieve!' in a voice so sweet, so pretty, so tender that I trembled to my very feet.

"I muttered: 'Let us return to the house!' He said nothing further, but followed me. As we were ascending the steps, he stopped me and said: 'You know if you abandon me, I shall kill myself.'

"I understood now that I had gone too far, and immediately became more reserved. When he reproached me for it, one day, I answered him: 'You are now too large for this kind of joking, and too young for serious love. I will wait.'

"I believed myself freed from him.

"He was sent away to school in the autumn. When he returned, the following summer, I had become engaged. He understood at once, and for over a week preserved so calm an appearance that I was much disturbed.

"The ninth day, in the morning, I perceived, on rising, a little paper slipped under my door. I seized it and read: 'You have abandoned me, and you know what I said. You have ordered my death. As I do not wish to be found by anyone but you, come

into the park, at the place where last year I said that I loved you, and look up.'

"I felt myself becoming mad. I dressed quickly and ran quickly, so quickly that I fell exhausted at the designated spot. His little school cap was on the ground in the mud. It had rained all night. I raised my eyes and saw something concealed by the leaves, for there was a wind blowing, a strong wind.

"After that, I knew nothing of what I did. I shouted, fainted, perhaps, and fell, then got up and ran to the house. I recovered my reason in my bed, with my mother for my pillow.

"I at first believed that I had dreamed all this in a frightful delirium. I muttered: 'And he, he—Gontran, where is he—'

"Then they told me it was all true. I dared not look at him again, but I asked for a lock of his blond hair. Here—it—is—" And the old lady held out her hand in a gesture of despair.

Then, after much use of her handkerchief and drying of her eyes, she continued: "I broke off my engagement without saying why—and I—have remained always the—widow of this child thirteen years old."

Then her head fell upon her breast and she wept pensively for a long time.

And, as they dispersed to their rooms for the night, a great hunter, whose quiet she had disturbed somewhat, whispered in the ear of his neighbor:

"What a misfortune to be so sentimental! Don't you think so?"

FRANCIS

WE WERE going out of the asylum when I perceived in one corner of the court-yard a tall, thin man, who was forever calling an imaginary dog. He would call out, with a sweet and tender voice: "Cocotte, my little Cocotte, come here, Cocotte, come here, my beauty," striking his leg, as one does to attract the attention of an animal. I asked the doctor what the matter was with the man. "Oh! that is an interesting case," said he, "he is a coachman named Francis, and he became insane from drowning his dog."

I insisted upon his telling me the story. The most simple and humble things sometimes strike most to our hearts.

And here is the adventure of this man which was known solely to a groom, his comrade.

In the suburbs of Paris lived a rich, middle-class family. Their villa was in the midst of a park, on the bank of the Seine. Their coachman was this

Francis, a country boy, a little awkward, but of good heart, simple and easily duped.

When he was returning one evening to his master's house, a dog began to follow him. At first he took no notice of it, but the persistence of the beast in walking on his heels caused him finally to turn around. He looked to see if he knew this dog. No, he had never seen it before.

The dog was frightfully thin and had great hanging dugs. She trotted behind the man with a woeful, famished look, her tail between her legs, her ears close to her head, and stopped when he stopped, starting again when he started.

He tried to drive away this skeleton of a beast: "Get out! If you want to save yourself— Go, now! Hou! Hou!" She would run away a few steps and then sit down waiting; then, when the coachman started on again, she followed behind him.

He made believe pick up stones. The animal fled a little way with a great shaking of the flabby mammillæ, but followed again as soon as the man turned his back.

Then the coachman, Francis, took pity and called her. The dog approached timidly, her back bent in a circle, and all the ribs showing under the skin. The man smoothed these projecting bones and, moved by pity, for the misery of the beast, said: "Come along, then!" Immediately the tail began to move; she felt the welcome, the adoption; and instead of staying at her new master's heels, she began to run ahead of him.

He installed her on some straw in his stable, then ran to the kitchen in search of bread. When she

had eaten her fill, she went to sleep, curled up, ring-like.

The next day the coachman told his master, who allowed him to keep the animal. She was a good beast, intelligent and faithful, affectionate and gentle.

But immediately they discovered in her a terrible fault. She was inflamed with love from one end of the year to the other. In a short time she had made the acquaintance of every dog about the country, and they roamed about the place day and night. With the indifference of a girl, she shared her favors with them, feigning to like each one best, dragging behind her a veritable mob composed of many different models of the barking race, some as large as a fist, others as tall as an ass. She took them to walk through routes with interminable courses, and when she stopped to rest in the shade, they made a circle about her and looked at her with tongues hanging out.

The people of the country considered her a phenomenon; they had never seen anything like it. The veterinary could not understand it.

When she returned to the stable in the evening, the crowd of dogs made siege for proprietorship. They wormed their way through every crevice in the hedge which inclosed the park, devastated the flower beds, broke down the flowers, dug holes in the urns, exasperating the gardener. They would howl the whole night about the building where their friend lodged, and nothing could persuade them to go away.

In the daytime, they even entered the house. It was an invasion, a plague, a calamity. The people of the house met at any moment, on the staircase,

and even in the rooms, little yellow pug dogs with tails decorated, hunting dogs, bulldogs, wolf hounds with filthy skin, vagabonds without life or home, beside some new-world enormities which frightened the children.

All the unknown dogs for ten miles around came, from one knew not where, and lived, no one knew how, disappearing all together.

Nevertheless, Francis adored Cocotte. He had named her Cocotte, "without malice, sure that she merited her name." And he repeated over and over again: "This beast is a person. It only lacks speech."

He had a magnificent collar in red leather made for her, which bore these words, engraved on a copper plate: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, from Francis, the coachman."

She became enormous. She was as fat as she had been thin, her body puffed out, under which hung always the long, swaying mammillæ. She had fattened suddenly and walked with difficulty, the paws wide apart, after the fashion of people that are too large, the mouth open for breath, wide open as soon as she tried to run.

She showed a phenomenal fecundity, producing, four times a year, a litter of little animals, belonging to all varieties of the canine race. Francis, after having chosen the one he would leave her "to take the milk," would pick up the others in his stable apron and pitilessly throw them into the river.

Soon the cook joined her complaints to those of the gardener. She found dogs under her kitchen range, in the cupboards, and in the coal bin, always fleeing whenever she encountered them.

The master, becoming impatient, ordered Francis to get rid of Cocotte. The man, inconsolable, tried to place her somewhere. No one wanted her. Then he resolved to lose her, and put her in charge of a wagoner who was to leave her in the country the other side of Paris, beyond De Joinville-le-Pont.

That same evening Cocotte was back.

It became necessary to take measures. For the sum of five francs, they persuaded a cook on the train to Havre to take her. He was to let her loose when they arrived.

At the end of three days, she appeared again in her stable, harassed, emaciated, exhausted.

The master was merciful, and insisted on nothing further.

But the dogs soon returned in greater numbers than ever, and were more provoking. And as they were giving a great dinner, one evening, a stuffed chicken was carried off by a dog, under the nose of the cook, who dared not dispute the right to it.

This time the master was angry, and calling Francis to him, said hotly: "If you don't kick this beast into the water to-morrow morning, I shall put you out, do you understand?"

The man was undone, but he went up to his room to pack his trunk, preferring to leave the place. Then he reflected that he would not be likely to get in anywhere else, dragging this unwelcome beast behind him; he remembered that he was in a good house, well paid and well fed; and he said to himself that it was not worth while giving up all this for a dog. He enumerated his own interests and finished by resolving to get rid of Cocotte at dawn the next day.

However, he slept badly. At daybreak he was up; and, preparing a strong cord, he went in search of the dog. She arose slowly, shook herself, stretched her limbs, and came to greet her master. Then his courage failed and he began to stroke her tenderly, smoothing her long ears, kissing her on the muzzle, lavishing upon her all the loving names that he knew.

A neighboring clock struck six; he could no longer hesitate. He opened the door; "Come," said he. The beast wagged her tail, understanding only that she was to go out.

They reached the bank and chose a place where the water seemed deepest. Then he tied one end of the cord to the beautiful leather collar, and taking a great stone, attached it to the other end. Then he seized Cocotte in his arms and kissed her furiously, as one does when he is taking leave of a person. Then he held her tight around the neck, fondling her and calling her "My pretty Cocotte, my little Cocotte," and she responded as best she could, growling with pleasure.

Ten times he tried to throw her in, and each time his heart failed him.

Then, abruptly, he decided to do it, and, with all his force, hurled her as far as possible. She tried at first to swim, as she did when taking a bath, but her head, dragged by the stone, went under again and again. She threw her master a look of despair, a human look, battling, as a person does when drowning. Then, before the whole body sank, the hind paws moved swiftly in the water; then they disappeared also.

For five minutes bubbles of air came to the surface, as if the river had begun to boil. And Francis, haggard, excited, with heart palpitating, believed he saw Cocotte writhing in the slime. And he said to himself, with the simplicity of a peasant: "What does she think of me by this time, that beast?"

He almost became idiotic. He was sick for a month, and each night, saw the dog again. He felt her licking his hands; he heard her bark.

It was necessary to call a physician. Finally he grew better; and his master and mistress took him to their estate near Rouen.

There he was still on the bank of the Seine. He began to take baths. Every morning he went down with the groom to swim across the river.

One day, as they were amusing themselves splashing in the water, Francis suddenly cried out to his companion:

"Look at what is coming toward us. I am going to make you taste a cutlet."

It was an enormous carcass, swelled and stripped of its hair, its paws moving forward in the air, following the current.

Francis approached it, making his jokes:

"What a prize, my boy! My! But it is not fresh! It is not thin, that is sure!"

And he turned about, keeping at a distance from the great, putrefying body.

Then, suddenly, he kept still and looked at it in strange fashion. He approached it again, this time near enough to touch. He examined carefully the collar, took hold of the leg, seized the neck, made it turn over, drew it toward him, and read upon the

green copper that still adhered to the discolored leather: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, from Francis, the coachman."

The dead dog had found her master, sixty miles from their home!

He uttered a fearful cry, and began to swim with all his might toward the bank, shouting all the way. And when he reached the land, he ran, all bare, through the country. He was mad!

THE ASSASSIN

THE guilty man was defended by a very young lawyer, a beginner, who spoke thus:

"The facts are undeniable, gentlemen of the jury. My client, an honest man, an irreproachable employee, gentle and timid, assassinated his employer in a moment of anger which seems to me incomprehensible. If you will allow me, I would like to look into the psychology of the crime, so to speak, without wasting any time or attempting to excuse anything. We shall then be able to judge better.

"John Nicholas Lougère is the son of very honorable people, who made of him a simple, respectful man.

"That is his crime: respect! It is a sentiment, gentlemen, which we of to-day no longer know, of which the name alone seems to exist while its power has disappeared. It is necessary to enter certain old, modest families to find this severe tradition, this religion of a thing or of a man, this sentiment where

belief takes on a sacred character, this faith which doubts not, nor smiles, nor entertains a suspicion.

"One cannot be an honest man, a truly honest man in the full force of the term, and be respectful. The man who respects has his eyes closed. He believes. We others, whose eyes are wide open upon the world, who live here in this hall of justice, this purger of society, where all infamy runs aground, we others who are the confidants of shame, the devoted defenders of all human meanness, the support, not to say the supporters, of male and female sharpers, from a prince to a tramp, we who welcome with indulgence, with complacence, with a smiling benevolence all the guilty and defend them before you, we who, if we truly love our profession, measure our legal sympathy by the size of the crime, we could never have a respectful soul. We see too much of this river of corruption, which catches the chiefs of power as well as the lowest scamp; we know too much of how it gives and takes and sells itself. Places, offices, honors brutally exchanged for a little money, or skillfully exchanged for titles and interests in industrial enterprises, or sometimes, simply for the kiss of a woman.

"Our duty and our profession force us to be ignorant of nothing, to suspect everybody, because everybody is doubtful; and we are taken by surprise when we find ourselves face to face with a man, like the assassin seated before you, who possesses the religion of respect to such a degree that he will become a martyr for it.

"We others, gentlemen, have a sense of honor, a certain need of propriety, from a disgust of baseness,

from a sentiment of personal dignity and pride; but we do not carry at the bottom of our hearts the blind, inborn, brutal faith of this man.

"Let me tell you the story of his life:

"He was brought up, like many another child, to separate all human acts into two parts: the good and the bad. He was shown the good with an irresistible authority which made him only distinguish the bad, as we distinguish day and night. His father did not belong to the superior race of minds who, looking from a height, see the sources of belief and recognize the social necessities born of these distinctions.

"He grew up, religious and confident, enthusiastic and limited. At twenty-two he married. His wife was a cousin, brought up as he was, simple and pure as he was. His was the inestimable privilege of having for a companion an honest woman with a true heart, the rarest and most respectable thing in the world. He had for his mother that veneration which surrounds mothers in patriarchal families, that profound respect which is reserved for divinities. This religion he reflected somewhat upon his wife, and it became scarcely less as conjugal familiarity increased. He lived in absolute ignorance of double dealing, in a state of constant uprightness and tranquil happiness which made him a being apart from the world. Deceiving no one he had never a suspicion that any one would deceive him.

"Some time before his marriage, he had become cashier in the office of Mr. Langlais, the man who was lately assassinated by him.

"We know, gentlemen of the jury, by the testimony of Mrs. Langlais and of her brother, Mr. Per-

thuis, a partner of her husband, of all the family and of all the higher employees of the bank, that Lougère was a model employee, upright, submissive, gentle, prompt, and deferential toward his superiors. They treated him with the consideration due to his exemplary conduct. He was accustomed to this homage and to a kind of respect shown to Mrs. Lougère, whose worthiness was upon all lips.

"But she died of typhoid fever in a few days' time. He assuredly felt a profound grief, but the cold, calm grief of a methodical heart. Only from his pallor and from a change in his looks was one able to judge how deeply he had been wounded.

"Then, gentlemen, the most natural thing in the world happened.

"This man had been married ten years. For ten years he had been accustomed to feel the presence of a woman near him always. He was habituated to her care, her familiar voice upon his return, the good night at evening, the cheerful greeting of the morning, the gentle rustle of the dress so dear to the feminine heart, to that caress, at once lover-like and maternal, which renders life pleasant, to that loved presence that made the hours move less slowly. He was also accustomed to being spoiled at table, perhaps, and to all those attentions which become, little by little, so indispensable.

"He could no longer live alone. Then, to pass the interminable evenings, he got into the habit of spending an hour or two in a neighboring wine shop. He would drink a glass and sit there motionless, following, with heedless eye, the billiard balls running after one another under the smoke of the pipes, lis-

tening to, without hearing, the discussions of the players, the disputes of his neighbors over politics, and the sound of laughter that sometimes went up from the other end of the room, from some unusual joke. He often ended by going to sleep, from sheer lassitude and weariness. But, at the bottom of his heart and of his flesh, there was the irresistible need of a woman's heart and flesh; and, without thinking, he approached each evening a little nearer to the desk where the cashier, a pretty blonde, sat, attracted to her unconquerably, because she was a woman.

"At first they chatted, and he got into the habit, so pleasant for him, of passing the evening by her side. She was gracious and kind, as one learns in this occupation to smile, and she amused herself by making him renew his order as often as possible, which makes business good.

"But each day Lougère was becoming more and more attached to this woman whom he did not know, whose whole existence he was ignorant of, and whom he loved only because he was in the way of seeing nobody else.

"The little creature was crafty, and soon perceived that she could reap some benefit from this guileless man; she then sought out the best means of exploiting him. The most effective, surely, was to marry him.

"This she accomplished without difficulty.

"Need I tell you, gentlemen of the jury, that the conduct of this girl had been most irregular and that marriage, far from putting a check to her flight, seemed on the contrary to render it more shameless?

"From the natural sport of feminine astuteness, she seemed to take pleasure in deceiving this honest man with all the employees of his office. I said with all. We have letters, gentlemen. There was soon a public scandal, of which the husband alone, as usual, was the only one ignorant.

"Finally, this wretch, with an interest easy to understand, seduced the son of the proprietor, a young man nineteen years old, upon whose mind and judgment she had a deplorable influence. Mr. Langlais, whose eyes had been closed up to that time, througn friendship for his employee, resented having his son in the hands, I should say in the arms of this dangerous woman, and was legitimately angry.

"He made the mistake of calling Lougère to him on the spot and of speaking to him of his paternal indignation.

"There remains nothing more for me to say, gentlemen, except to read to you the recital of the crime, made by the lips of the dying man, and submitted as evidence. It says:

"'I learned that my son had given to this woman, that same night, ten thousand francs, and my anger was stronger on that account. Certainly, I never suspected the honorableness of Lougère, but a certain kind of blindness is more dangerous than positive faults. And so I had him come to me and told him that I should be obliged to deprive myself of his services.

"'He remained standing before me, terrified, and not comprehending. He ended by demanding, rather excitedly, some explanation. I refused to give him any, affirming that my reasons were wholly personal. He believed then that I suspected him of indelicacy and, very pale, besought, implored me to explain. Held by this idea, he was strong and began to talk loud. As I kept silent, he abused

and insulted me, until he arrived at such a degree of exasperation that I was fearful of results.

"'Then, suddenly, upon a wounding word that struck upon a full heart, I threw the whole truth in his face.

"'He stood still some seconds, looking at me with haggard eyes. Then I saw him take from my desk the long shears, which I use for making margins to certain registers, I saw him fall upon me with uplifted arm, and I felt something enter my throat just above the breast, without noticing any pain.'

"This, gentlemen of the jury, is the simple recital of this murder. What more can be said for his defense? He respected his second wife with blindness because he respected his first with reason."

After a short deliberation, the prisoner was acquitted.

SELFISHNESS

WE READ lately in the journals, the following lines:

"BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, January 22.

"A frightful disaster has occurred which throws into consternation our maritime population, so grievously afflicted two years since. The fishing boat, commanded by shipmaster Javel, entering into port, was carried to the west, and broken upon the rocks of the breakwater near the pier. In spite of the efforts of the salvage boat, and of life lines shot out to them, four men and a cabin boy perished. The bad weather continues. We fear new calamities."

Who is this shipmaster Javel? Is he the brother of the one-armed Javel? If this poor man tossed by the waves, and dead perhaps, under the *débris* of his boat cut in pieces, is the one I think he is, he assisted, eighteen years ago, at another drama, terrible and simple as are all the formidable dramas of the billows.

Javel the elder was then master of a smack. The smack is the fishing boat *par excellence*. Solid, fearing no kind of weather, with round body, rolled incessantly by the waves, like a cork, always lashed by

the hard, foul winds of the Channel, it travels the sea indefatigably, with sail filled, making in its wake a path which reaches the bottom of the ocean, detaching all the sleeping creatures from the rocks, the flat fishes glued to the sand, the heavy crabs with their hooked claws, and the lobster with his pointed mustaches.

When the breeze is fresh and the waves choppy, the boat puts about to fish. A rope is fastened to the end of a great wooden shank tipped with iron, which is let down by means of two cables slipping over two spools at the extreme end of the craft. And the boat, driving under wind and current, drags after her this apparatus, which ravages and devastates the bottom of the sea.

Javel had on board his younger brother, four men, and a cabin boy. He had set out from Boulogne in fair weather to cast the nets. Then, suddenly, the wind arose and an unlooked-for squall forced the boat along over the waters. It gained the coast of England; but a tremendous sea beat so against the cliffs and the shore that it was impossible to enter port. The little boat put to sea again and returned to the coast of France. The tempest continued to make the piers unapproachable, enveloping them with foam, and shutting off all places of refuge by noise and danger.

The fishing boat set out again, running under the billows, tossed about, shaken up, suffocated in mountains of water, but merry in spite of all, accustomed to heavy weather, which sometimes held it for five or six hours between the two countries. unable to land in the one or the other.

Finally, the hurricane ceased, when they came out into open sea, and although the sea was still high, the commander ordered them to cast the net. Then the great fishing tackle was thrown overboard, and two men at one side and two at the other begin to unwind from rollers the cable which holds it. Suddenly it touches the bottom, but a high wave tips the boat. Javel the younger, who is in the prow directing the casting of the net, totters, and finds his arm caught between the cable, stopped an instant by the motion, and the wood on which it slipped. He made a desperate effort with his other hand to lift the cable, but the net already dragged and the rapidly slipping cable would not yield.

Faint from pain, he called. All ran to him. His brother left the helm. They threw their full force upon the rope, forcing it away from the arm it was grinding. It was in vain. "We must cut it," said a sailor, and he drew from his pocket a large knife which could, in two blows, save young Javel's arm. But to cut was to lose the net, and the net meant money, much money—five hundred francs; it belonged to the elder Javel, who held to his property.

With tortured heart he cried out: "No, don't cut; I'll luff the ship." And he ran to the wheel, putting the helm about. The boat scarcely obeyed, paralyzed by the net which counteracted its power, and dragged besides from the force of the leeway and the wind.

Young Javel fell to his knees with set teeth and haggard eyes. He said nothing. His brother returned, fearing the sailor's cutting.

"Wait! wait!" he said, "don't cut; we must cast anchor."

The anchor was thrown overboard, all the chain paid out, and they then tried to take a turn around the capstan with the cables in order to loosen the strain from the weight of the net. They were successful, finally, and released the arm which hung inert under a sleeve of bloody woolen cloth.

Young Javel was nearly beside himself. They removed the covering from his arm, and then saw something horrible; bruised flesh, from which the blood spurted in waves, as if it were forced by a pump. The man himself looked at his arm and murmured: "Fool!"

Then, as the hemorrhage made a river on the deck of the boat, the sailors cried: "He'll lose all his blood. We must bind the vein!"

They then took a rope, a great, black, tarred rope and, twisting it around the member above the wound, bound it with all their strength. Little by little the jets of blood stopped, and finally ceased altogether.

Young Javel arose, his arm hanging by his side. He took it by the other hand, raised it, turned it, shook it. Everything was broken; the bones were crushed completely; only the muscles held it to his body. He looked at it with sad eyes, as if reflecting. Then he seated himself on a folded sail, and his comrades came around him, advising him to soak it continually to prevent its turning black.

They put a bucket near him and, from minute to minute, he would pour water from a glass upon the horrible wound, leaving a thread of color in the clear water.

"You would be better down below," said his brother. He went down, but at the end of an hour came up again, feeling better not to be alone. And then, he preferred the open air. He sat down again upon the sail and continued bathing his arm.

The fishing was good. Large fishes with white bodies were lying beside him, shaken by the spasms of death. He looked at them without ceasing to sprinkle his mangled flesh.

When they started to return to Boulogne, another gale of wind prevented. The little boat began again its mad course, bounding, tumbling, shaking sadly the wounded man.

The night came. The weather was heavy until daybreak. At sunrise, they could see England again, but as the sea was a little less rough, they turned toward France, beating in the wind.

Toward evening, young Javel called his comrades and showed them black traces and a villainous look of decay around that part of his arm which was no longer joined to his body.

The sailors looked at it, giving advice: ' That must be gangrene," said one.

"It must have salt water on it," said another.

Then they brought salt water and poured it on the wound. The wounded man became livid, grinding his teeth, and twisting with pain; but he uttered no cry.

When the burning grew less, he said to his brother: "Give me your knife." The brother gave it to him.

"Hold this arm up for me, drawn out straight."

His brother did as he was asked.

Then he began to cut. He cut gently, with caution, severing the last tendons with the sharp blade as one would a thread with a razor. Soon he had only a stump. He fetched a deep sigh and said: "That had to be done. Fool!"

He seemed relieved and breathed with force. He continued to pour water on the part of his arm remaining to him.

The night was still bad and they could not land. When the day appeared, young Javel took his detached arm and examined it carefully. Putrefaction had begun. The comrades came also and examined it, passing it from hand to hand, touching it, turning it over, and smelling it.

His brother said: "It's about time to throw that into the sea."

Young Javel was angry; he replied: "No, oh! no! I will not. It is mine, isn't it? Worse still, it is my arm." He took it and held it between his legs.

"It won't grow any less putrid," said the elder.

Then an idea came to the wounded man. In order to keep the fish which they kept out a long time, they had with them barrels of salt. "Couldn't I put it in there in the brine?" he asked.

"That's so," declared the others.

Then they emptied one of the barrels, already full of fish from the last few days, and, at the bottom, they deposited the arm. Then they turned salt upon it and replaced the fishes, one by one.

One of the sailors made a little joke: "Perhaps I could sell it, if I cried it around town."

And everybody laughed except the Javel brothers.

The wind still blew. They beat about in sight of Boulogne until the next day at ten o'clock. The wounded man still poured water on his arm. From time to time he would get up and walk from one end of the boat to the other. His brother, who was at the wheel, shook his head and followed him with his eye.

Finally, they came into port.

The doctor examined the wound and declared it in good shape. He dressed it perfectly and ordered rest. But Javel could not go to bed without seeing his arm again, and went quickly back to the dock to find the barrel which he had marked with a cross.

They emptied it before him, and he found his arm refreshed, well preserved in the salt. He wrapped it in a napkin brought for this purpose, and took it home.

His wife and children examined carefully this fragment of their father, touching the fingers, taking up the grains of salt that had lodged under the nails. Then they went to the joiner for a little coffin.

The next day a complete procession of the crew of the fishing smack followed the detached arm to its interment. The two brothers, side by side, conducted the ceremony. The parish priest held the coffin under his arm.

Javel the younger gave up going to sea. He obtained a small position in port, and, later, whenever he spoke of the accident, he would say to his auditor, in a low tone: "If my brother had been willing to cut the cable, I should still have my arm, be sure. But he was looking to his own pocket."

THE WATCHDOG

MADAME LEFEVRE was a country woman, a widow, one of those half peasants with ribbons and furbelows on her cap, a person who spoke with some care, taking on grandiose airs in public, and concealing a pretentious, brute soul under an exterior comically glossed over, as she concealed her great red hands under gloves of ecru silk.

She had for a servant a simple, rustic, named Rose. The two women lived in a little house with green shutters, on a highway in Normandy, in the center of the country of Caux. As there was a garden spot in front of the house, they cultivated some vegetables.

One night, some one robbed them of a dozen onions. When Rose perceived the larceny, she ran to tell Madame, who came down in a wool petticoat. Here was a sorrow, and a terror, besides! Some one had robbed, robbed Madame Lefevre! And when a robber visits one in the country, he may come again.

And the two frightened women studied the footprints, prattled, and supposed certain things:

"Here," they would say, "they must have passed here. They must have put their foot on the wall and then leaped into the flower bed."

And they trembled for the future. How could they sleep peacefully now?

The news of the robbery spread. The neighbors arrived to prove and discuss the matter, each in his turn. To each newcomer the two women explained their observations and their ideas. A farmer on the other side of them said:

"You ought to keep a dog."

That was true, that was; they ought to keep a dog, even if it were good for nothing but to give an alarm. Not a big dog, Monsieur! What would they do with a big dog? It would ruin them to feed it! But a little dog, a little puppy that could yap.

When everybody was gone, Madame Lefevre discussed this idea of having a dog for a long time. After reflection, she made a thousand objections, terrified at the thought of a bowlful of porridge. Because she was of that race of parsimonious country dames who always carry pennies in their pockets, in order to give alms ostensibly along the street, and to the contributions on Sunday.

Rose, who loved animals, brought forward her reasons and defended them with astuteness. And finally, it was decided that they should have a dog, but a little dog.

They began to look for one, but could only find big ones, swallowers of food enough to make one

tremble. The Rolleville grocer had one, very small; but he asked two francs for him, to cover the expense of bringing him up. Madame Lefevre declared that she was willing to feed a dog, but she never would buy one.

Then the baker, who knew the circumstances, brought them, one morning, a little, yellow animal, nearly all paws, with the body of a crocodile, the head of a fox, a tail, trumpet-shaped, a regular plume, large like the rest of his person. Madame Lefevre found this cur that cost nothing very beautiful. Rose embraced it, and then asked its name. The baker said it was, "Pierrot."

He was installed in an old soap box, and he was given first, a drink of water. He drank. Then they gave him a piece of bread. He ate.

Madame Lefevre, somewhat disturbed, had one idea:

"When he gets accustomed to the house, we can let him run loose. He will find something to eat in roaming around the country."

In fact, they did let him run, but it did not prevent him from being famished. Besides, he only barked to ask for his pittance, in which case, he did indeed bark with fury.

Anybody could enter the garden. Pierrot would go and caress each newcomer, remaining absolutely mute. Nevertheless, Madame Lefevre became accustomed to the beast. She even came to love it, and to give it from her hand, sometimes, pieces of bread dipped in the sauce from her meat.

But she had never dreamed of a tax, and when they came to her for eight francs—eight francs,

Madame!—for this little cur of a dog, that would not even bark, she almost fainted from shock. It was immediately decided that they must get rid of Pierrot. No one wanted him. All the inhabitants, for ten miles around, refused him. Then it was resolved that, by some means, they must make him acquainted with the little house. Now, to be acquainted with the little house is to eat of the chalk pit. They make all dogs acquainted with the little house when they wish to get rid of them.

In the midst of a vast plain, there appeared a kind of hut, or rather, the little roof of a cottage, rising above the sod. It is the entrance to the marlpit. One great shaft went down about twenty meters, where it was met by a series of long galleries, penetrating the mine.

Once a year they descended in a sort of carriage and marled the clay. All the rest of the time, the pit serves as a cemetery for condemned dogs; and often, when one passes near the mouth, there comes to his ears plaintive howls, furious barking, and lamentable appeals.

Hunting and shepherd dogs flee with fright at the first sound of these noises; and when one stoops down above this opening, he finds an abominable odor of putrefaction. Frightful dramas have taken place within the bounds of this shadow.

When a beast suffers from hunger at the bottom of the pit for ten or twelve days, nourished only on the remains of his predecessors, sometimes a new animal, larger and more vigorous, is suddenly thrown in. There they are, alone, famished,

their eyes glittering. They watch each other, follow each other, hesitate anxiously. But hunger presses; they attack each other, struggling a long time infuriated; and the strong eats the weak, devouring him alive.

When it was decided that they would get rid of Pierrot, they looked about them for an executioner. The laborer who was digging in the road, demanded six sous for the trouble. This appeared exaggerated folly to Madame Lefevre. A neighbor's boy would be content with five sous; that was still too much. Then Rose observed that it would be better for them to take him themselves, because he would not then be tortured on the way and warned of his lot; and so it was decided that they go together at nightfall.

They gave him, this evening, a good soup with a bit of butter in it. He swallowed it to the last drop. And when he wagged his tail with contentment, Rose took him in her apron.

They went at a great pace, like marauders, across the plain. As soon as they reached the pit, Madame Lefevre stooped to listen; she wanted to know if any other beast was howling in there. No, there was no sound. Pierrot would be alone. And Rose, who was weeping, embraced him, then threw him in the hole. And they stooped, both of them, and listened.

They heard first a heavy thud; then the sharp, broken cry of a wounded beast; then a succession of imploring supplications, the head raised to the opening.

He yapped, oh! how he yapped!

They were seized with remorse, with a foolish, inexplicable fear. They jumped up and ran away. And, as Rose ran more quickly, Madame Lefevre would cry: "Wait, Rose, wait for me!"

Their night was filled with frightful nightmares. Madame Lefevre dreamed that she seated herself at the table to eat soup, and when she uncovered the tureen, Pierrot was in it. He darted out and bit her on the nose. She awoke and thought she heard the barking still; she listened; she was deceived. Again she slept, and found herself upon a great road, an interminable road, that she must follow. Suddenly, in the middle of the road, she perceived a basket, a great, farmer's basket, a basket that brought her fear. Nevertheless, she finished by opening it, and Pierrot, hidden within, seized her hand, not loosing it again. And she knew that she was lost, carrying about forever suspended upon her arm, a dog with open mouth.

At the dawn of day, she arose, almost insane, and ran to the pit.

He was barking, barking still; he had barked all night. She began to sob and called him with a thousand caressing names. He responded with all the tender inflections a dog's voice is capable of. Then she wished to see him again, promising herself to make him happy to the day of her death. She ran to the house of the man in charge of the mine, and told him her story. The man listened without laughing. When she had finished, he said: "You want your dog? That will be four francs."

It was a shock. All her grief vanished at a blow.

"Four francs," said she, "Four francs! would you make a murderer of yourself!"

He replied: "You believe that I am going to bring my ropes and tackle and set them up, and go down there with my boy and get bitten, perhaps, by your mad dog, for the pleasure of giving him back to you? You shouldn't have thrown him in there!"

She went away indignant. "Four francs!"

As soon as she entered, she called Rose and told her the demands of the miner. Rose, always resigned, answered: "Four francs! It is considerable money, Madame." Then she added that they might throw the poor dog something to eat, so that it might not die there.

Madame Lefevre approved gladly, and again they set out with a big piece of bread and butter. They broke off morsels, which they threw in one after the other, calling in turn to Pierrot. And as soon as the dog had got one piece, he barked for the next.

They returned that evening, then the next day, every day. But never more than one journey.

One morning, at the moment they dropped the first morsel, they heard suddenly, a formidable barking in the shaft. There were two of them! Another dog had been thrown in, a big dog!

Rose cried: "Pierrot!" And Pierrot answered: "Yap, Yap!" Then they began to feed him, but each time they threw down a bit, they heard a terrible tussle, then the plaintive cries of Pierrot bitten by his companion, who ate all, being the stronger.

Then they specified: "This is for you, Pierrot!" Pierrot evidently got nothing.

The two women, amazed, looked at each other. And Madame Lefevre declared in a sharp voice:

"I certainly can't feed all the dogs they throw in there. We must give it up."

Overcome with the idea of all those dogs living at her expense, she went away, carrying even the bread that she had begun to feed to poor Pierrot.

Rose followed, wiping her eyes on the corner of her blue apron.

THE DANCERS

"GREAT misfortunes grieve me little," said John Bridelle, an old bachelor who passed for a sceptic. "I have seen war at close range; I could stride over dead bodies pitilessly. The strong brutalities of nature, where we can utter cries of horror or indignation, do not wring our hearts or send the shiver down the back, as do the little wounding sights of life.

"Certainly, the most violent grief that one can experience is for a mother the loss of a child, and for a son the loss of a mother. It is violent and terrible, it overturns and lacerates; but one is healed of such catastrophes, as of large, bleeding wounds. But, certain accidents, certain things hinted at, suspected, certain secret griefs, certain perfidy, of the sort that stirs up in us a world of grievous thoughts, which opens before us suddenly the mysterious door of moral suffering, complicated, incurable, so much the more profound because it seems worthy, so much the more stinging because unseizable, the more tenacious because artifical, these

leave upon the soul a train of sadness, a feeling of sorrow, a sensation of disenchantment that we are long in ridding ourselves of.

"I have ever before my eyes two or three things, that possibly had not been noticed by others, but which entered into my sympathies like deep, unhealable stings.

"You will not comprehend, perhaps, the emotion that has relieved me from these rapid impressions. I will tell you only one. It is old, but lives with me as if it occurred yesterday. It may be imagination alone that keeps it fresh in my memory.

"I am fifty years old. I was young then and studious by nature. A little sad, a little dreamy, impregnated with a melancholy philosophy, I never cared much for the brilliant *cafés*, noisy comrades, nor stupid girls. I rose early, and one of my sweetest indulgences was to take a walk alone, about eight o'clock in the morning, in the nursery of the Luxemburg.

"Perhaps you do not know this nursery? It was like a forgotten garden of another century, a pretty garden, like the smile of an old person. Trimmed hedges separated the straight, regular walks, calm walks between two walls of foliage neatly pruned. The great scissors of the gardener clipped without mercy the offshoots of the branches. While here and there were walks bordered with flowers, and clumps of little trees, arranged like collegians promenading, masses of magnificent roses, and regiments of fruit-trees.

"The whole of one corner of this delightful copse was inhabited by bees. Their straw houses, skillfully

spaced upon the planks, opened to the sun their great doors, like the opening of a sewing thimble. And all along the path golden flies were buzzing, true mistresses of this peaceful place, ideal inhabitants of these walks and corridors.

"I went there nearly every morning. I would seat myself upon a bench and read. Sometimes, I would allow my book to fall upon my knees, while I dreamed and listened to the living Paris all about me, and enjoyed the infinite repose of these rows of ancient oaks.

"All at once I perceived that I was not alone a frequenter of this spot, reached through an opening in the fence. From time to time I encountered, face to face, an old man in the corner of the thicket. He wore shoes with silver buckles, trousers with a flap, a tobacco-colored coat, lace in place of a cravat, and an unheard-of hat with nap and edges worn, which made one think of the deluge.

"He was thin, very thin, angular, smiling, grimacing. His bright eyes sparkled, agitated by a continual movement of the pupils; and he always carried a superb cane, with a gold head, which must have been a souvenir, and a magnificent one.

"This good man astonished me at first, then interested me beyond measure. And I watched him behind a wall of foliage, and followed him from afar, stopping behind shrubbery, so as not to be seen.

"It happened one morning, as he believed himself entirely alone, that he began some singular movements; some little bounds at first, then a bow; then he struck up some capers with his lank legs, then

turned cleverly, as if on a pivot, bending and swaying in a droll fashion, smiling as if before the public, making gestures with outstretched arms, twisting his poor body like a jumping-jack, throwing tender, ridiculous salutations to the open air. He was dancing!

"I remained petrified with amazement, asking myself which of the two was mad, he or I. But he stopped suddenly, advanced as actors do upon the stage, bowed, and took a few steps backward, with the gracious smiles and kisses of the comedian, which he threw with trembling hand to the two rows of shapely trees.

"After that, he resumed his walk with gravity.

"From this day, I never lost sight of him. And each morning he recommenced his peculiar exercise.

"A foolish desire led me to speak to him. I ventured and, having bowed, I said:

"'It is a fine day, to-day, sir.'

"He bowed. 'Yes, sir, it is like the weather of long ago.'

"A week after this, we were friends, and I knew his history. He had been dancing master at the Opera from the time of Louis XV. His beautiful cane was a gift from Count de Clermont. And when he began to speak of dancing, he never knew when to stop.

"One day he confided in me:

"'I married La Castris, sir. I will present her to you, if you wish, but she never comes here so early. This garden, you see, is our pleasure and our life. It is all that remains to us of former times. It seems

to us that we could not exist if we did not have it. It is old and distinguished, is it not? Here I can seem to breathe air that has not changed since my youth. My wife and I pass every afternoon here. But I, I come again in the morning, because I rise so early.'

"After luncheon, I returned to the Luxemburg, and soon I perceived my friend, who was giving his arm with great ceremony to a little old woman clothed in black, to whom I was presented. It was La Castris, the great dancer, loved of princes, loved of the king, loved of all that gallant century which seems to have left in the world an odor of love.

"We seated ourselves upon a bench. It was in the month of May. A perfume of flowers flitted through all the tidy walks; a pleasant sun glistened between the leaves and spread over us large spots of light. The black robe of La Castris seemed all permeated with brightness.

"The garden was empty. The roll of carriages could be heard in the distance.

"'Will you explain to me,' said I to the old dancing master, 'what the minuet was?'

"He started. 'The minuet, sir, is the queen of dances and the dance of queens, do you understand? Since there are no more kings, there are no more minuets.'

"And he commenced, in pompous style, a long, dithyrambic eulogy of which I comprehended nothing. I wanted him to describe the step to me, all the movements, the poses. He perplexed and exasperated himself with his lack of strength, and then became nervous and spent. Then, suddenly, turning

toward his old companion, always silent and grave, he said:

"'Elise, will you, I say—will you be so kind as to show this gentleman what the minuet really was?'

"She turned her unquiet eyes in every direction, then rising, without a word, placed herself opposite him.

"Then I saw something never to be forgotten.

"They went forward and back with a child-like apishness, smiling to each other and balancing, bowing and hopping like two old puppets made to dance by some ancient mechanism, a little out of repair, and constructed long ago by some skillful workman following the custom of his day.

"And I looked at them, my heart troubled with extraordinary sensations, my soul moved by an indescribable melancholy. I seemed to see a lamentable, comic apparition, the shadow of a century past and gone. I had a desire to laugh when I felt more like weeping.

"Then they stopped; they had ended the figure of the dance. For some seconds they remained standing before each other, smirking in a most surprising manner; then they embraced each other with a sob.

"I left town three days later for the provinces. I have never seen them again. When I returned to Paris, two years later, they had destroyed the nursery garden. What have the old couple done without the dear garden of other days, with its labyrinths, its odor of long ago, and its walks shaded by graceful elms? Are they dead? Are they wandering through modern streets, like exiles without hope? Are they

dancing somewhere, grotesque specters, a fantastic minuet among the cypresses in the cemetery, along the paths beside the tombs, in the moonlight?

"The remembrance haunts me, oppresses and tortures me; it remains with me like a wound. Why? I cannot tell.

"You will find this very ridiculous, without doubt."

AUNT ROSE

THE eight o'clock train ends sleep for some and sleeplessness for others. As for me, every journey hinders me from sleeping the night following.

I had arrived about five o'clock at the house of my friends, the Muret d'Artuses, to pass three weeks with them on their estate D'Abelle. It is a pretty house, built after the architecture of the last century by one of his ancestors, and kept in the family ever since. It has the home-like character of dwellings always inhabited, always furnished, filled with living beings, and identified with the same kind of people. Nothing changes there; nothing evaporates from the soul of the home; it is never dismantled, the tapestries are never torn down, but are allowed to fade and discolor upon the same walls. None of the old furniture is thrown out, only changed in place sometimes, to make room for a new piece, which takes its place like a newborn child among its brothers and sisters.

The house is on a hillock, in the midst of a park sloping down to the river, where it is spanned by a

little stone bridge, resembling the back of an ass. Beyond the water are some meadows, where cows are to be seen cropping the juicy grasses, gentle beasts, whose humid eyes seem full of roses, of mist, and of the freshness of pastures. I love this dwelling as one loves that which he ardently wishes to possess. I return here every autumn with infinite pleasure, and leave with regret.

After I had dined with this calm, friendly family, where I am received like a parent, I asked of Paul Muret, my comrade:

"What room are you going to give me this year?"

"Aunt Rose's room."

An hour later, Mrs. Muret d'Artus, followed by her three children, two tall girls and a rogue of a boy, installed me in this room which had belonged to Aunt Rose, where I had never yet slept.

When I was alone, I examined the walls, the furniture, the whole physiognomy of the apartment, in order to accustom my mind to it. I knew it but little, although I had been in it many times, and had noticed but indifferently the pastel portrait of Aunt Rose, which gave the name to the room.

She meant nothing at all to me, this old Aunt Rose, with her curls, obscured behind glass. She had the appearance of a good woman, of course a woman of principle and precept, strong also on moral maxims and recipes for the kitchen, one of those old aunts who put gaiety to flight, the morose and frowning angel of a provincial family.

Besides, I had not heard them speak of her; I knew nothing of her life or her death. Did she date

from this century or the preceding? Had she left this world after a calm or a ruffled existence? Had she gone to heaven with the pure soul of the old maid, the placid soul of the matron, the tender soul of the mother, or with a soul harassed by love?

What did it matter? Nothing, only this name, "Aunt Rose," seemed to me ridiculous, commonplace, sordid.

I took one of the candles and looked at her severe countenance, hung high in an ancient frame of black wood. Then, having found her uninteresting, disagreeable, even antipathetic, I fell to examining the furniture. It all dated from the time of Louis XVI., the Revolution, and the Directory.

In this ancient chamber, not a chair nor a curtain but was penetrated with some remembrance, some subtle odor, some odor of wood, of stuffs, of hangings, of homes where hearts have lived and loved and suffered.

Then I got into bed but I could not sleep. At the end of a nervous hour or two, I decided to rise and write some letters.

I opened a little mahogany secretary, with copper trimmings, placed between the two windows, hoping to find some ink and paper. But I discovered nothing but an old pen, very much used, made of a porcupine quill, and bitten at the end. I was closing the desk when a shining point attracted my attention. It was a kind of yellow metal spot which was raised a little above the shelf in the corner of the writing tablet.

Having scraped it with my finger, it seemed to me to move. I seized it between my nails and pulled as

hard as I could. It came out easily. It was a long gold pin, concealed in a hole in the wood.

What for? The thought came immediately that it might work some spring which concealed a secret drawer, and I looked for it. It took a long time. After two hours of closest investigation, I discovered another hole opposite the face of the first, but at the bottom of a groove. I forced the pin into it: a little shelf sprang out to me, and I saw two packages of letters, of yellow letters, tied with blue ribbon.

I read them and have here transcribed them:

"You wish then that I should give you back your letters, my very dear friend. Here they are, but it gives me great pain. What have you feared? That I lose them? They are always under lock and key. That some one robs me of them? But I watch them too closely, for they are my dearest treasure.

"Yes, it is extremely painful for me. I can but ask myself if you have not, at the bottom of your heart, some regret? Not the regret of having loved me, because I know that you will love me always, but the regret of having expressed upon white paper this living love, at times when your heart confided not in me, but in the pen you held in your hand. When we love we have need of confiding in something, in speaking, or writing, and so we speak or we write. Words fly away, sweet words made of music, leaving their imprint of tenderness, words warm and light, evaporated as soon as uttered, remaining in the memory alone, not capable of being seen or touched or kissed as are the words written with your hand. Your letters? Yes, I send them back! But with what sorrow!

"Your delicate shame for these ineffaceable terms of endearment came too late. You have regretted, in your soul, sensitive and fearful, and shadowed by an indefinable cloud, that you wrote to the man who loves you. You have recalled some phrases that stirred your memory, and then you have said: 'I will make ashes of those words.'

"Be content, be at ease. Here are your letters. I love you."

"My Friend:

"You have not understood, you have not even suspected. I do not regret, I shall never regret having expressed my love for you. I shall write you always, but you must return all my letters as soon as they are received.

"I shall shock you much, my friend, if I tell you the reason of this request. It is not poetic, nor pensive, but practical. I am afraid, not of you, certainly, but of chance. I am guilty. I do not wish my fault to affect anyone but me.

"You understand me? We might die, you or I. You might fall from your horse, since you ride every day; you could die from some attack, from heart disease, from a carriage accident, in a thousand ways; for, if there is only one death, there are more ways of coming to it than we have days to live.

"Then your sister, your sister-in-law, your brother might find my letters!

"Do you think they love me? I do not think so, even a little. And then, if they adored me, is it possible for two women, two women and a man, knowing a secret — a secret like that — to keep it?

"I may appear to be saying villainous things, in speaking of your death and then suspecting the discretion of your relatives.

"But we must all die, one day or another, you know that? And it is almost certain that one of us will precede the other to the next world. It seems best, then, to foresee all dangers, even that one.

"As for me, I shall keep your letters beside my own, in the secret drawer of my little secretary. I will show them to you there, in their silk case, sleeping side by side, full of our love, like lovers in a tomb.

"You will say to me: 'But if you die first, my dear, your husband will find these letters.'

"Oh! I do not fear that. In the first place, he knows nothing about the secret drawer, and would not look for it. And even if he found it, after my death I fear nothing.

"Have you thought of all the love letters of dead people that have been found? I have; and it is my long-continued reflection on the subject that has decided me to recall my letters to you.

"And remember that a woman never, never burns, tears, or destroys the letters of the man who loves her. All her life is there, all her hope, her interest, her dreams. These little papers which bear our names and caress us with sweet words are relics, and we adore them

as if they were chapels, chapels in which we are the saints. A woman's love letters are her titles to beauty, titles to charm and attractiveness, the innate pride of her being, the treasures of her heart. No, no, never does a woman destroy these secret and delicious archives of her life.

"But we shall die, like all the world, and then—then these letters—who will find them? The husband? What can he do? Nothing. They are simply burned.

"Oh! I have thought much about this, much. Think of it! Every day women are dying that have been loved, every day traces and proofs of their guilt fall into the hands of their husbands, and yet never does a scandal arise or a duel take place.

"Think, my dear, what man is, and the heart of man. One takes vengeance on the living, fights with the man who has dishonored him, kills him as soon as he sees him, but why?—yes, why? I do not know, exactly. But if he finds after death proofs of this kind, he burns them, he says nothing, he continues to extend his hand to his friend, and is very well satisfied that the letters did not fall into strange hands, and with knowing that they are destroyed.

"Oh! I know, among my friends, men who have found these proofs, and who feign to know nothing; who would have been wild with rage had they been found while she lived. But she is dead. Honor has changed. The tomb is the unfailing apology for conjugal faults.

"Hence, I can keep our letters, which in your hands would be a menace to us both.

"Do you dare to say I cannot reason?

"I love you and kiss your hair.

"ROSE."

I had raised my eyes to the portrait of Aunt Rose, and looked again at her severe, wrinkled face (a little wicked), and I thought of all the souls of women we never could know, whom we suppose so different from what they are, whose native, simple deceit, whose tranquil duplicity, we never penetrate, and the saying of De Vigny comes to my mind:

"Always the companion of whose heart you are not sure."

THE STRING

ALONG all the roads around Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the burgh because it was market day. The men were proceeding with slow steps, the whole body bent forward at each movement of their long twisted legs, deformed by their hard work, by the weight on the plow which, at the same time, raised the left shoulder and swerved the figure, by the reaping of the wheat which made the knees spread to make a firm "purchase," by all the slow and painful labors of the country. Their blouses, blue, "stiff-starched," shining as if varnished, ornamented with a little design in white at the neck and wrists, puffed about their bony bodies, seemed like balloons ready to carry them off. From each of them a head, two arms, and two feet protruded.

Some led a cow or a calf by a cord, and their wives, walking behind the animal, whipped its haunches with a leafy branch to hasten its progress.

They carried large baskets on their arms from which, in some cases, chickens and, in others, ducks thrust out their heads. And they walked with a quicker, livelier step than their husbands. Their spare straight figures were wrapped in a scanty little shawl, pinned over their flat bosoms, and their heads were enveloped in a white cloth glued to the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Then a wagon passed at the jerky trot of a nag, shaking strangely, two men seated side by side and a woman in the bottom of the vehicle, the latter holding on to the sides to lessen the hard jolts.

In the public square of Goderville there was a crowd, a throng of human beings and animals mixed together. The horns of the cattle, the tall hats with long nap of the rich peasant, and the headgear of the peasant women rose above the surface of the assembly. And the clamorous, shrill, screaming voices made a continuous and savage din which sometimes was dominated by the robust lungs of some countryman's laugh, or the long lowing of a cow tied to the wall of a house.

All that smacked of the stable, the dairy and the dirt heap, hay and sweat, giving forth that unpleasant odor, human and animal, peculiar to the people of the field.

Maître Hauchecome, of Breaute, had just arrived at Goderville, and he was directing his steps toward the public square, when he perceived upon the ground a little piece of string. Maître Hauchecome, economical like a true Norman, thought that everything useful ought to be picked up, and he bent painfully, for he suffered from rheumatism. He took

the bit of thin cord from the ground and began to roll it carefully when he noticed Maître Malandain, the harness-maker, on the threshold of his door, looking at him. They had heretofore had business together on the subject of a halter, and they were on bad terms, being both good haters. Maître Hauchecome was seized with a sort of shame to be seen thus by his enemy, picking a bit of string out of the dirt. He concealed his "find" quickly under his blouse, then in his trousers' pocket; then he pretended to be still looking on the ground for something which he did not find, and he went toward the market, his head forward, bent double by his pains.

He was soon lost in the noisy and slowly moving crowd, which was busy with interminable bargainings. The peasants milked, went and came, perplexed, always in fear of being cheated, not daring to decide, watching the vender's eye, ever trying to find the trick in the man and the flaw in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, had taken out the poultry which lay upon the ground, tied together by the feet, with terrified eyes and scarlet crests.

They heard offers, stated their prices with a dry air and impassive face, or perhaps, suddenly deciding on some proposed reduction, shouted to the customer who was slowly going away: "All right, Maître Authirne, I'll give it to you for that."

Then little by little the square was deserted, and the Angelus ringing at noon, those who had stayed too long, scattered to their shops.

At Jourdain's the great room was full of people eating, as the big court was full of vehicles of all

kinds, carts, gigs, wagons, dump carts, yellow with dirt, mended and patched, raising their shafts to the sky like two arms, or perhaps with their shafts in the ground and their backs in the air.

Just opposite the diners seated at the table, the immense fireplace, filled with bright flames, cast a lively heat on the backs of the row on the right. Three spits were turning on which were chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton; and an appetizing odor of roast beef and gravy dripping over the nicely browned skin rose from the hearth, increased the jovialness, and made everybody's mouth water.

All the aristocracy of the plow ate there, at Maître Jourdain's, tavern keeper and horse dealer, a rascal who had money.

The dishes were passed and emptied, as were the jugs of yellow cider. Everyone told his affairs, his purchases, and sales. They discussed the crops. The weather was favorable for the green things but not for the wheat.

Suddenly the drum beat in the court, before the house. Everybody rose except a few indifferent persons, and ran to the door, or to the windows, their mouths still full and napkins in their hands.

After the public crier had ceased his drum-beating, he called out in a jerky voice, speaking his phrases irregularly:

"It is hereby made known to the inhabitants of Goderville, and in general to all persons present at the market, that there was lost this morning, on the road to Benzeville, between nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocketbook containing five hundred francs and some business papers. The finder is re-

quested to return same with all haste to the mayor's office or to Maître Fortune Houlbreque of Manneville, there will be twenty francs reward."

Then the man went away. The heavy roll of the drum and the crier's voice were again heard at a distance.

Then they began to talk of this event discussing the chances that Maître Houlbreque had of finding or not finding his pocketbook.

And the meal concluded. They were finishing their coffee when a chief of the gendarmes appeared upon the threshold.

He inquired:

"Is Maître Hauchecome, of Breaute, here?"

Maître Hauchecome, seated at the other end of the table, replied:

"Here I am."

And the officer resumed:

"Maître Hauchecome, will you have the goodness to accompany me to the mayor's office? The mayor would like to talk to you."

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, swallowed at a draught his tiny glass of brandy, rose, and, even more bent than in the morning, for the first steps after each rest were specially difficult, set out, repeating: "Here I am, here I am."

The mayor was awaiting him, seated on an armchair. He was the notary of the vicinity, a stout, serious man, with pompous phrases.

"Maître Hauchecome," said he, "you were seen this morning to pick up, on the road to Benzeville, the pocketbook lost by Maître Houlbreque, of Manneville."

The countryman, astounded, looked at the mayor, already terrified, by this suspicion resting on him without his knowing why.

"Me? Me? Me pick up the pocketbook?"

"Yes, you, yourself."

"Word of honor, I never heard of it."

"But you were seen."

"I was seen, me? Who says he saw me?"

"Monsieur Malandain, the harness-maker."

The old man remembered, understood, and flushed with anger.

"Ah, he saw me, the clodhopper, he saw me pick up this string, here, M'sieu' the Mayor." And rummaging in his pocket he drew out the little piece of string.

But the mayor, incredulous, shook his head.

"You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecome, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man worthy of credence, mistook this cord for a pocketbook."

The peasant, furious, lifted his hand, spat at one side to attest his honor, repeating:

"It is nevertheless the truth of the good God, the sacred truth, M'sieu' the Mayor. I repeat it on my soul and my salvation."

The mayor resumed:

"After picking up the object, you stood like a stilt, looking a long while in the mud to see if any piece of money had fallen out."

The good, old man choked with indignation and fear.

"How anyone can tell—how anyone can tell—such lies to take away an honest man's reputation! How can anyone—"

There was no use in his protesting, nobody believed him. He was confronted with Monsieur Malandain, who repeated and maintained his affirmation. They abused each other for an hour. At his own request, Maître Hauchecome was searched, nothing was found on him.

Finally the mayor, very much perplexed, discharged him with the warning that he would consult the public prosecutor and ask for further orders.

The news had spread. As he left the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded and questioned with a serious or bantering curiosity, in which there was no indignation. He began to tell the story of the string. No one believed him. They laughed at him.

He went along, stopping his friends, beginning endlessly his statement and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out, to prove that he had nothing.

They said:

"Old rascal, get out!"

And he grew angry, becoming exasperated, hot, and distressed at not being believed, not knowing what to do and always repeating himself.

Night came. He must depart. He started on his way with three neighbors to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of string; and all along the road he spoke of his adventure.

In the evening he took a turn in the village of Breaute, in order to tell it to everybody. He only met with incredulity.

It made him ill at night.

The next day about one o'clock in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a hired man in the employ of Mal-

tre Breton, husbandman at Ymanville, returned the pocketbook and its contents to Maître Houlbreque of Manneville.

This man claimed to have found the object in the road; but not knowing how to read, he had carried it to the house and given it to his employer.

The news spread through the neighborhood. Maître Hauchecome was informed of it. He immediately went the circuit and began to recount his story completed by the happy climax. He was in triumph.

"What grieved me so much was not the thing itself, as the lying. There is nothing so shameful as to be placed under a cloud on account of a lie."

He talked of his adventure all day long, he told it on the highway to people who were passing by, in the wine-shop to people who were drinking there, and to persons coming out of church the following Sunday. He stopped strangers to tell them about it. He was calm now, and yet something disturbed him without his knowing exactly what it was. People had the air of joking while they listened. They did not seem convinced. He seemed to feel that remarks were being made behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week he went to the market at Goderville, urged solely by the necessity he felt of discussing the case.

Malandain, standing at his door, began to laugh on seeing him pass. Why?

He approached a farmer from Crequetot, who did not let him finish, and giving him a thump in the stomach said to his face:

"You big rascal."

Then he turned his back on him.

Maître Hauchecome was confused, why was he called a big rascal?

When he was seated at the table, in Jourdain's tavern he commenced to explain "the affair."

A horse dealer from Monvilliers called to him:

"Come, come, old sharper, that's an old trick; I know all about your piece of string!"

Hauchecome stammered:

"But since the pocketbook was found."

But the other man replied:

"Shut up, papa, there is one that finds, and there is one that reports. At any rate you are mixed with it."

The peasant stood choking. He understood. They accused him of having had the pocketbook returned by a confederate, by an accomplice.

He tried to protest. All the table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner and went away, in the midst of jeers.

He went home ashamed and indignant, choking with anger and confusion, the more dejected that he was capable with his Norman cunning of doing what they had accused him of, and ever boasting of it as of a good turn. His innocence to him, in a confused way, was impossible to prove, as his sharpness was known. And he was stricken to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Then he began to recount the adventures again, prolonging his history every day, adding each time, new reasons, more energetic protestations, more solemn oaths which he imagined and prepared in his hours of solitude, his whole mind given up to the story of the string. He was believed so much the

less as his defense was more complicated and his arguing more subtile.

"Those are lying excuses," they said behind his back.

He felt it, consumed his heart over it, and wore himself out with useless efforts. He wasted away before their very eyes.

The wags now made him tell about the string to amuse them, as they make a soldier who has been on a campaign tell about his battles. His mind, touched to the depth, began to weaken.

Toward the end of December he took to his bed.

He died in the first days of January, and in the delirium of his death struggles he kept claiming his innocence, reiterating.

"A piece of string, a piece of string,—look—here it is, M'sieu' the Mayor."

THE GAMEKEEPER

THEY were telling stories about the adventures and accidents of hunting, after dinner. An old friend of us all, Monsieur Boniface, a great killer of beasts and a great drinker of wine, a man robust and gay, full of wit, sense, and philosophy, of an ironical and resigned philosophy, displaying itself in poignant drolleries and never by dullness, said all at once:

"I know a story of the hunt, or rather a drama of the hunt, which is strange enough. It does not at all resemble the usual thing in that sort of story, and so I have never told it, thinking that it would never amaze anybody.

"It isn't sympathetic, you understand? I would say that it has not that kind of interest which impassions or charms, or which impresses a person agreeably. Well, here it is:

"I was about thirty-five years old and had a mania for hunting.

"At that time I owned a very isolated place in the neighborhood of Jumièges, surrounded by forests

and very good for hares and rabbits. I only passed three or four days a year there, the surroundings not permitting me to take a friend with me.

"I had placed there as a guard a custodian, a retired gendarme, a brave man, violent, strict in obeying orders, terrible to poachers, and fearing nothing. He lived all alone, far from the village, in a little house, or rather hut, with two rooms on the ground floor, kitchen and store-room, and two more above these. One of them, a sort of box just big enough for a bed, a wardrobe, and one chair, was reserved for me.

"Father Cavalier occupied the other. When I said that he was alone in this dwelling I expressed myself wrongly. He had taken with him his nephew, a sort of rascal, fifteen years old, who went for provisions to the village three kilometers distant, and helped the old man in his daily duties. This scapegrace, thin, tall, a little bent, had hair so yellow that it seemed the down of a plucked chicken, and so scanty that he had the appearance of being bald.

"He possessed furthermore enormous feet and gigantic hands, the hands of a colossus. He squinted a little and never looked straight at anyone. Though a young man, he always had the effect of those malodorous traits common to some animals. He was a polecat or a fox, that rogue.

"He slept in a sort of hole at the top of the stairs leading to the two bedrooms. But during my short stays at the pavilion,—I called that hut the pavilion,—Marius yielded his nest to an old woman of Ecorcheville named Celeste, who came as my cook, the rations of Father Cavalier being much too insuf-

ficient. You know, now, the personages and the locality. And here is the adventure:

"It was in 1854, the fifteenth of October, I remember the date, and shall never forget it. I left Rouen on horseback, followed by my dog Bock, a great hound of Poitou, big of chest and strong of muzzle, who beat the bushes like a Pont Andemer spaniel.

"I carried on the pommel my traveling sack, and my gun was slung over my shoulder. It was a cold day, a day of chill, dispiriting wind, with dark clouds scudding across the sky. While riding up the hill of Cantelen, I looked at the vast valley of the Seine which the river traversed as far as the horizon with serpent-like folds. Rouen at the left showed all its towers against the sky, and on the right the sight was stopped by the far-off wooded hills. Then I crossed the forest of Roumare, going now at a walk, now at a trot, and I arrived about five o'clock before the pavilion, where Father Cavalier and Celeste awaited me. For the last ten years at the same date, I had presented myself in the same fashion and the same mouths greeted me, with the same words:

"'Good day, Monsieur, your health is good?'

"Cavalier had hardly changed a bit. He resisted time like an old tree. But Celeste, especially in the last four years, had become unrecognizable. She was almost broken in two and although still active, she walked with the upper part of her body so bent forward that it almost formed a right angle with her legs. The old woman, very devoted, always appeared moved on seeing me again, and said to me at

each departure: 'Maybe it is the last time.' And the disconsolate, timorous farewell of this poor servant, this despairing resignation before the inevitable death surely approaching for her, stirred my heart in a strange fashion.

"Well, I dismounted and while Cavalier, whose hand I had shaken, led my horse to the little building which served as stable, I entered the kitchen, which was also the dining-room, followed by Celeste. Then the guard rejoined us. I saw at the first sight, that he had not his usual expression of countenance. He seemed preoccupied, ill at ease, and restless. I said to him:

"'Eh! well, Cavalier! Is everything going on as you would like?'

"He murmured: 'Partly yes, and partly no. There is something that bothers me.'

"'Well, what is it, my good man? Tell me about it.'

"But he shook his head.

"'No, not yet, Monsieur. I don't want to annoy you like that just on your arrival, with my troubles.'

"I insisted, but he absolutely refused to discuss the matter before dinner. By his looks, though, I understood that it was something serious. Not knowing what to say, I asked him:

"'And the game, have you plenty of it?'

"'Oh! as for the game, yes, there is plenty of it. You will find all you want, thank God, I have seen to that.'

"He said this with so much gravity, with a gravity so serious that it became comical. His big, gray mustache had the appearance of falling from his lips.

Suddenly I remembered that I had not seen his nephew.

"'And Marius? where is he? why doesn't he show himself.'

"The guard gave a start, and looking me brusquely in the face:

"'Well, Monsieur,' he said, 'I would rather tell you the whole thing at once; yes, I would. It is on account of him that I am worried.'

"'Ah! ah! Well, what is it?'

"'He is in the stable, Monsieur, and I am expecting him every moment to appear.'

"'What has he done then?'

"But the keeper hesitated; then with a changed and troubled voice, his face plowed by deep wrinkles, the wrinkles of an old man, he continued slowly:

"'This is the story: I saw this winter that someone was poaching in the woods of the Roseraies, but I could not catch the man. I spent nights and nights on the watch. Nothing. And during that time they began to poach on the Ecorcheville preserve. I grew thin from worry. But as for catching the marauder, impossible! A person would have thought that he was forewarned of my steps and my plans, the rascal. But one fine day when I was brushing Marius's Sunday breeches, I found forty sous in his pocket. Now where did he get that money, the lad? I thought it over for a week, and I observed that he went out—went out just when I came in to rest, yes, Monsieur.

"'Now I watched him, but without suspecting anything, oh, yes, without suspecting. And as I had gone to bed before him one morning I rose hastily and followed him. To follow a person, there is no

one like me, Monsieur. And I caught him, yes, caught Marius, poaching on your lands, Monsieur,—my nephew, and I your keeper! My blood boiled, and I nearly killed him on the spot, I beat him so! Ah! Yes, I did beat him! and I promised that when you arrived, he would have to stand some more correction from my hand in your presence, for an example.

"'Now you have it; I have grown thin from grieving over it. You know what it is to be annoyed like that. But what would you have done? He has no father, nor mother, that lad, no relative but me: I have kept him and I could not turn him out, could I? But I told him if he began it again, it would be the end, no more pity. Did I do right, Monsieur?'

"I answered, holding out my hand to him:

"'You did right, Cavalier, you are a brave man.'

"He rose. 'Thank you, Monsieur. Now I'll go and look for him. The correction is necessary for an example.'

"I knew that it was useless to try to dissuade the old man from his project. So I let him act according to his will. He went to find the rogue and brought him in, leading him by the ear. I was seated on a straw chair with stern countenance.

"Marius seemed grown, and still uglier than last year, with his bad, shy, air. His great hands seemed monstrous. His uncle pushed him before me, and with his military voice exclaimed: 'Ask pardon of the proprietor.'

"The lad did not utter a word. Then grasping him under the eyes, the former gendarme raised him from the floor, and began to beat him with such

violence that I rose to stop the blows. The boy now called out:

"'Mercy, mercy! mercy—I promise.'

"Cavalier placed him on the floor and forced him to kneel. 'Ask pardon,' he said. The rascal muttered with downcast eyes: 'I ask pardon.'

"Then his uncle raised him, and dismissed him with a slap that nearly knocked him down. He went out and I did not see him again that evening. But Cavalier appeared dejected. 'He has a bad disposition,' said he. And all during dinner he kept repeating:

"'Oh! that makes me anxious, Monsieur, you don't know how anxious that makes me.'

"I tried to console him, but in vain. And I went to bed early to go hunting at the break of day. My dog was already asleep on the floor at the foot of my bed when I blew out the candle.

"I was awakened toward the middle of the night by the furious bark of Bock, and I immediately saw that my room was full of smoke. I leaped from my bed, lighted the candle, ran to the door and opened it. A whirlwind of flames entered. The house was on fire. I quickly shut the thick oak door, and having put on my breeches I let the dog down by the window, by means of a rope made of my clothes tied together, then having thrown out my clothing, my game-bag, and my gun, I escaped by the same means myself. Then I began to shout at the top of my lungs:

"'Cavalier! Cavalier! Cavalier!'

"But the keeper did not awake. He was in the sound sleep of an old gendarme. Nevertheless, I saw

by the lower windows that the whole ground floor was nothing but a blazing furnace; and I perceived that some one had filled it with straw to help the flames. So the house had been set on fire. I again began to shout furiously:

"'Cavalier!'

"Then the thought came to me that the smoke was asphyxiating him. I had an inspiration, and, slipping two cartridges into my gun, I fired a shot right into the window. The six panes of glass flew into the room in tiny particles. This time the old man had heard, and he appeared in his shirt, terrified by the light which lighted up the whole front of the house. I cried to him:

"'The house is on fire. Jump out the window quick! quick!'

"The flames, leaping suddenly by the opening below, were licking the wall, climbing toward him, about to encircle him. He jumped and fell on his feet like a cat. It was time. The thatched roof broke in at the middle, above the stairs, which framed as it were a sort of chimney; and an immense red sheaf rose in the air spreading like a shower of water and sending a rain of sparks around the hut. In a few seconds it was nothing but a mass of flames. Cavalier dejected asked:

"'How did it take fire?'

"I answered: 'It was set on fire in the kitchen.'

"He muttered: 'Who could have set it on fire?'

"And I, guessing, suddenly said: 'Marius.'

"And the old man understood. He stammered:

"'Oh! God! That is why he did not come back into the house.'

"But a horrible thought entered my mind. I cried:

"'And Celeste? Celeste?'

"He did not answer, but the house crumbled beneath us, forming now nothing but a thick, flaming building brazier, a formidable funeral pile, where the poor woman could no longer be anything but a red coal of human flesh. We had not heard a single cry. But as the fire reached the adjoining shed, I thought all at once of my horse, and Cavalier ran to rescue him. Hardly had he opened the door of the stable than a quick and supple body, crawling between his feet, threw him on his face. It was Marius, fleeing with all his might. The man in a second arose. He tried to run after the wretch, to catch him; but understanding that he would not succeed, and maddened by an irresistible fury, yielding to one of those moments without reflection, instantaneous, which cannot be seen nor opposed, he seized my gun which was lying on the ground near him and, before I could make a movement, he fired even without knowing if the weapon was loaded.

"One of the cartridges which had been put in to announce the conflagration had not exploded, and the charge struck the fugitive full on the back, and he pitched forward on his face, covered with blood. He began to scrape the ground with his hand and knee, as if he were still trying to escape on all fours, in the fashion of wounded hares who see the hunter coming. The boy was already dying, and expired before the house had finished burning without uttering a word.

"Cavalier, still in his shirt, with his legs bare, stood near by, motionless, stupefied. When the vil-

lage people arrived they took away my keeper who was like a crazy man.

"I appeared at the trial as a witness, and told all the facts in detail, without changing anything. Cavalier was acquitted. But he disappeared the very same day, and left the country. I never saw him afterward.

"There you have, gentlemen, my hunting story."

MOTHER SAVAGE

I.

I HAD not been back to Virelogne for fifteen years. I went there to hunt in the autumn, staying with my friend Serval, who had finally rebuilt his château, which had been destroyed by the Prussians.

I was infinitely fond of that country. It is one of the delicious corners of the world which has a sensuous charm for the eyes. You love them with a physical love. We folk whom Mother Earth attracts, keep certain tender recollections, often keen, for certain springs, certain woods, certain ponds, certain hills, which have softened us like happy events. Sometimes even memory returns toward a forest nook, or a bit of shore, or a blossoming orchard, which had been visited just once, or some happy day, which has remained in our heart like those pictures of women seen in the street, on a spring morning, with a thin transparent costume, and which leave in our soul and

flesh an unappeased, unforgetable desire, the sensation of balked happiness.

At Virelogne, I loved the whole region, sowed with little woods, and traversed by brooks which ran through the soil like veins bringing blood to the earth.

We fished in them for crabs, trout, and eels! Divine happiness! We could bathe in certain places and often found woodcock in the tall grass which grew on the banks of those little narrow streams.

I went, light as a goat, watching my two dogs forage in front of me. Serval, a hundred meters away, on my right, was beating up a field of Burgundian grass. I turned the thickets which formed the boundaries of the Sandes forest, and I perceived a hut in ruins.

Suddenly I recollected that I had seen it for the last time in 1869, neat, vine-clad, with chickens before the door. What is sadder than a dead house with its skeleton standing, dilapidated and sinister?

I recalled also that a woman had given me a glass of wine there, on a day of great fatigue, and that Serval had then told me the story of the inhabitants. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I had seen before, was a tall dry lad who likewise passed for a ferocious killer of game. People called them the Savage family.

Was it a name or a nickname? I hailed Serval. He came with his long stork's stride.

I asked him: "What have become of those people?" And he told me this adventure.

II.

"When war was declared, the younger Savage, who was then about thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving his mother alone in the house. People did not pity her very much, the old woman, because they knew that she had money.

"So she stayed all alone in this isolated house, so far from the village, on the edge of the woods. She was not afraid, however, being of the same race as her men, a strong, tall, thin, old woman, who seldom laughed, and with whom no one joked. The women of the fields do not laugh much, anyway. That is the men's business! They have a sad and narrow soul, leading a life which is gloomy and without bright spots.

"The peasant learns a little of the noisy gaiety of the pothouse, but his wife remains serious with a constantly severe expression of countenance. The muscles of her face never learn the motions of laughter.

"Mother Savage continued her ordinary existence in her hut, which was soon covered with snow. She went to the village once a week to get bread and a little meat: then she returned to her cottage. As people spoke of wolves, she carried a gun on her shoulder, her son's gun, rusty, with the stock worn by the rubbing of the band. She was a curious sight, the tall Savage woman, a little bent, walking with slow strides through the snow, the barrel of the weapon extending beyond the black headdress, which imprisoned the white hair that no one had ever seen.

"One day the Prussians arrived. They were distributed among the inhabitants according to the means and resources of each. The old woman, who was known to be rich, had four soldiers billeted upon her.

"They were four big young men with fair flesh, fair beard, and blue eyes, grown stout in spite of the fatigues they had endured, and good fellows, even if they were in a conquered territory. Alone with this old woman, they showed themselves full of consideration for her, sparing her fatigue and expense as far as they could do so. All four might have been seen making their toilette at the well in the morning, in their shirt-sleeves, splashing their pink and white flesh, the flesh of the men of the north, in the water, on cold snowy days, while Mother Savage came and went preparing their soup. Then they might have been observed cleaning the kitchen, polishing the floor, chopping wood, peeling potatoes, washing the clothes, doing all the household duties, like four good sons around their mother.

"But she thought continually of her own son, the old mother, of her tall, thin boy with his crooked nose, brown eyes, and stiff mustache which made a cushion of black hair on his upper lip. She asked each of the soldiers installed at her hearth:

"'Do you know where his French regiment has gone, the Twenty-third Infantry? My boy is in it.'

"They answered: 'No, we don't know anything at all about it.'

"And understanding her grief and worry they, who had mothers at home, rendered her a thousand little services.

"She liked them very well, moreover, her four enemies: for peasants seldom have patriotic hatreds: that only belongs to the superior classes. The humble, those who pay the most because they are poor and because every new burden rests upon them, those who are killed in masses, who form the true food for cannon because they have numbers, those who, in a word, suffer most cruelly the atrocious miseries of the poor, because they are the weakest and the most unresisting, understand little of those bellicose ardors, the excitable points of honor and those pretended political combinations which exhaust two nations in six months, the victorious as well as the vanquished.

"They said in the country, speaking of Mother Savage's gendarmes: 'There are four who have found a snug berth.'

"Now, one morning, as the old woman was alone in the house, she perceived afar off on the plain a man coming toward her home. Soon she recognized him: it was the postman, charged with distributing letters. He handed her a folded paper, and she drew from their case her spectacles which she used for sewing, and read:

"'Madame Savage, this notice is to give you sad news. Your son Victor was killed by a cannon-ball yesterday, which virtually cut him in two. I was very near, as we were side by side in the company and he had asked me to tell you the same day if anything happened to him.

"'I took his watch from his pocket to bring it to you when the war is finished.

"'I remain your friend,

"'CÉSAIRE RIVOT.

"'Soldier of the 2d Class, in the 23d of foot.'

"The letter was dated three weeks back.

"She did not weep. She stood motionless, so astounded that she did not yet suffer.

"She thought: 'Victor is killed!'

"Then little by little the tears came to her eyes and grief overwhelmed her heart. Ideas came to her one by one, frightful, torturing ideas. She would never kiss him again, her big boy, never again. The gendarmes had killed the father, the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon-ball. And it seemed to her that she saw the thing, the horrible thing: the head falling, the eyes open, while he gnawed the end of his big mustache, as he did in moments of anger.

"What had they done with his body afterward? If they had only sent her boy back to her, as they had her husband, with a bullet in his forehead.

"But she heard a sound of voices. It was the Prussians, who were returning from the village. She quickly hid the letter in her pocket, and received them tranquilly, with her ordinary expression of face, having had time to wipe her eyes.

"They were all four laughing, enchanted, for they were bringing back a fine rabbit, stolen no doubt, and they made a sign to the old woman that they were going to have something good to eat.

"She applied herself at once to the duties of preparing the breakfast; but when it came to killing the rabbit, her heart failed her. And yet it was not the first. One of the soldiers killed it with a blow behind the ears.

"Once the animal was dead, she took the red body out of the skin; but the sight of the blood

which she touched, which covered her hands, of the warm blood which she felt getting cold and coagulating, made her tremble from head to foot; and she kept seeing her tall boy cut in two and all bleeding, like this still palpitating animal.

"She sat at the table with her Prussians, but she could not eat, not even a mouthful. They devoured the rabbit without occupying themselves with her. She looked at them aside without speaking, nursing an idea, with her countenance so impassive that they perceived nothing.

"Suddenly she said: 'I don't even know your names, and it is a month since we have been together.' They understood, not without difficulty, what she wished and gave her their names. That was not enough, she made them write them for her on a piece of paper, with the address of their families, and resting her spectacles on her large nose she scanned this unknown handwriting, then she folded the sheet and put it in her pocket, with the letter which told of the death of her son.

"When the meal was finished, she said to the men:

"'I am going to work for you.'

"And she began to carry straw to the garret in which they slept.

"They were astonished at this act. She explained to them that they would be less cold; and they assisted her. They piled the bundles of straw up to the roof, and thus they made for themselves a sort of big room with four walls of forage, warm and sweet-smelling, where they would sleep wonderfully.

"At dinner one of them was disturbed to see that Mother Savage did not eat anything. She asserted

that she had cramps. Then she lighted a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans climbed to their lodging by the ladder which they used every evening.

"As soon as the trapdoor was closed, the old woman took away the ladder, then she noiselessly opened the outside door and returned to get more bundles of straw, with which she filled the kitchen. She went out barefooted in the snow, so softly that the men heard nothing. From time to time she listened to the deep and uneven snores of the four sleeping soldiers. When she thought her preparations were sufficient, she threw into the fire one of the bundles of straw, and when it had ignited she piled it on the others, and then went out again and looked.

"A brilliant light illuminated in a few seconds all the interior of the cottage; then it became a frightful brazier, a gigantic, glowing furnace, whose gleams shone through the narrow window and cast a dazzling light upon the snow.

"Then a great cry came from the top of the house; there was a clamor of human shrieks, of heartrending appeals of anguish and terror. Then, the trapdoor having sunk down into the interior, a whirlwind of fire leaped through the attic, pierced the thatched roof, and ascended to the sky like the flame of a great torch; and the whole cottage was burning.

"Nothing more was heard inside but the crackling of the flames, the crumbling of the walls, and the crashing of the beams. The roof suddenly fell in, and the glowing remnant of the house shot up into the air, amid a cloud of smoke, a great fountain of sparks.

"The white field, lighted up by the fire, glistened like a cloth of silver tinted with red.

"A bell in the distance began to ring. The old Savage woman stood erect before her ruined home, armed with a gun, her son's, for fear one of the men should escape.

"When she saw that her work was finished, she threw the weapon in the fire. A report rang out.

"The people arrived, peasants and Prussians.

"They found the woman sitting on the trunk of a tree, tranquil and satisfied.

"A German officer who could speak French like a Frenchman, asked her:

"'Where are the soldiers?'

"She stretched her thin arm toward the red mass of flames, which were now dying down, and answered in a strong voice:

"'They are in there!'

"All pressed around her. The Prussian asked:

"'How did the fire start?'

"She replied:

"'I set the house on fire.'

"They did not believe her, thinking that the sudden disaster had made her mad. Then, as everybody gathered around and listened, she related the whole thing from one end to the other, from the arrival of the letter to the last cry of the men, burning up with the house. She did not forget a single detail of what she had felt nor what she had done.

"When she had finished she drew two papers from her pocket, and, to distinguish them from the last gleams of the fire, she again put on her spectacles. Then she said, showing one of them: 'This is the

death of Victor.' Showing the other, she added, nodding her head toward the red ruins: 'And this is the list of their names, so that some one may write the news home about them.'

"She quietly handed the white sheet to the officer, who took her by the shoulders, and she resumed:

"'You will write how it happened, and you will tell their relatives that it was I who did it, Victoire Simon, the Savage, don't forget.'

"The officer shouted some orders in German, to the soldiers; they seized her, and threw her against the still heated walls of the house. Then a squad of twelve men drew up in a rank opposite her, at a distance of twenty meters. She did not stir. She had understood. She waited.

"An order resounded, which was followed by a long report of muskets. One delayed shot went off all alone, after the others.

"The old woman did not fall. She sank down as if some one had mowed off her legs.

"The Prussian officer approached. She was cut almost in two, and in her shriveled hand she held her letter, bathed in blood."

My friend Serval added:

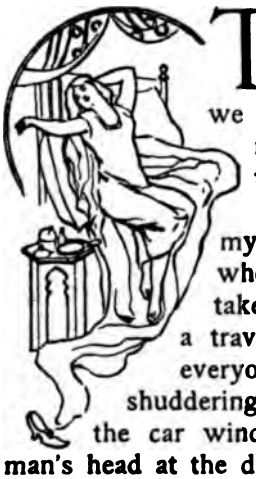
"It was by way of reprisal that the Germans destroyed the château of the district, which belonged to me."

I thought of the poor, fine young men burned there; and of the atrocious heroism of that other mother, shot against the wall.

And I picked up a little pebble, still blackened by the fire.

A TRAVELER'S TALE

I.



The car was full as we left Cannes. We were conversing; everybody was acquainted. As we passed Tarascon some one remarked: "Here's the place where they assassinate people."

And we began to talk of the mysterious and untraceable murderer, who for the last two years had taken, from time to time, the life of a traveler. Everyone made his guess, everyone gave his opinion; the women shudderingly gazed at the dark night through the car windows, fearing suddenly to see a man's head at the door. We all began telling frightful stories of terrible encounters, meetings with madmen in a flying-express, of hours passed opposite a suspected individual.

Each man knew an anecdote to his credit, each one had intimidated, overpowered, and throttled some evildoer in most surprising circumstances, with an admirable presence of mind and audacity.

A physician, who spent every winter in the south, desired, in his turn, to tell an adventure:

"I," said he, "never have had the luck to test my courage in an affair of this kind; but I knew a woman, now dead, one of my patients, to whom the most singular thing in the world happened, and also the most mysterious and pathetic.

"She was Russian, the Countess Marie Baranow, a very great lady, of an exquisite beauty. You know how beautiful the Russian women are, or at least how beautiful they seem to us, with their fine noses, their delicate mouths, their eyes of an indescribable color, a blue gray, and their cold grace, a little hard! They have something about them, mischievous and seductive, haughty and sweet, tender and severe, altogether charming to a Frenchman. At the bottom, it is, perhaps, the difference of race and of type which makes me see so much in them.

"Her physician had seen for many years that she was threatened with a disease of the lungs, and had tried to persuade her to come to the south of France; but she obstinately refused to leave St. Petersburg. Finally, the last autumn, deeming her lost, the doctor warned her husband, who directed his wife to start at once for Mentone.

"She took the train, alone in her car, her servants occupying another compartment. She sat by the door, a little sad, seeing the fields and villages pass, feeling very lonely, very desolate in life, without children, almost without relatives, with a husband whose love was dead and who cast her thus to the end of the world without coming with her, as they send a sick valet to the hospital.

"At each station her servant Ivan came to see if his mistress wanted anything. He was an old domestic, blindly devoted, ready to accomplish all the orders which she should give him.

"Night fell, and the train rolled along at full speed. She could not sleep, being wearied and nervous.

"Suddenly the thought struck her to count the money which her husband had given her at the last minute, in French gold. She opened her little bag and emptied the shining flood of metal on her lap.

"But all at once a breath of cold air struck her face. Surprised, she raised her head. The door had just opened. The Countess Marie, bewildered, hastily threw a shawl over the money spread upon her lap, and waited. Some seconds passed, then a man in evening dress appeared, bareheaded, wounded on the hand, and panting. He closed the door, sat down, looked at his neighbor with gleaming eyes, and then wrapped a handkerchief around his wrist, which was bleeding.

"The young woman felt herself fainting with fear. This man, surely, had seen her counting her money and had come to rob and kill her.

"He kept gazing at her, breathless, his features convulsed, doubtless ready to spring upon her.

"He suddenly said:

"'Madame, don't be afraid!'

"She made no response, being incapable of opening her mouth, hearing her heart-beats, and a buzzing in her ears.

"He continued:

"'I am not a malefactor, Madame.

"She continued to be silent, but by a sudden movement which she made, her knees meeting, the gold coins began to run to the floor as water runs from a spout.

"The man, surprised, looked at this stream of metal, and he suddenly stooped to pick it up.

"She, terrified, rose, casting her whole fortune on the carpet and ran to the door to leap out upon the track.

"But he understood what she was going to do, and springing forward, seized her in his arms, seated her by force, and held her by the wrists.

"' Listen to me, Madame,' said he, 'I am not a malefactor; the proof of it is that I am going to gather up this gold and return it to you. But I am a lost man, a dead man, if you do not assist me to pass the frontier. I cannot tell you more. In an hour we shall be at the last Russian station; in an hour and twenty minutes we shall cross the boundary of the Empire. If you do not help me I am lost. And yet I have neither killed anyone, nor robbed, nor done anything contrary to honor. This I swear to you. I cannot tell you more.'

"And kneeling down he picked up the gold, even hunting under the seats for the last coins, which had rolled to a distance. Then, when the little leather bag was full again he gave it to his neighbor without saying a word, and returned to seat himself at the other corner of the compartment. Neither of them moved. She kept motionless and mute, still faint from terror, but recovering little by little. As for him, he did not make a gesture or a motion, remained sitting erect, his eyes staring in front of

him, very pale, as if he were dead. From time to time she threw a quick look at him, and as quickly turned her glance away. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, and was very handsome, with the mien of a gentleman.

"The train ran through the darkness, giving at intervals its shrill signals, now slowing up in its progress, and again starting off at full speed. But presently its progress slackened, and after several sharp whistles it came to a full stop.

"Ivan appeared at the door for his orders.

"The Countess Marie, her voice trembling, gave one last look at her companion; then she said to her servant, in a quick tone:

"'Ivan, you will return to the Count; I do not need you any longer.'

"The man, bewildered, opened his enormous eyes. He stammered:

"'But, my lady—'

"She replied:

"'No, you will not come with me, I have changed my mind. I wish you to stay in Russia. Here is some money for your return home. Give me your cap and cloak.'

"The old servant, frightened, took off his cap and cloak, obeying without question, accustomed to the sudden whims and caprices of his masters. And he went away, with tears in his eyes.

"The train started again, rushing toward the frontier.

"Then the Countess Marie said to her neighbor:

"'These things are for you, Monsieur,—you are Ivan, my servant. I make only one condition to what

I am doing: that is, that you shall not speak a word to me, neither to thank me, nor for anything whatsoever.'

"The unknown bowed without uttering a syllable.

"Soon the train stopped again, and officers in uniform visited the train.

"The Countess handed them her papers, and pointing to the man seated at the end of the compartment said:

"'That is my servant Ivan, whose passport is here.'

"The train again started.

"During the night they sat opposite each other, both mute.

"When morning came, as they stopped at a German station, the unknown got out; then, standing at the door, he said:

"'Pardon me, Madame, for breaking my promise, but as I have deprived you of a servant, it is proper that I should replace him. Have you need of anything?'

"She replied coldly:

"'Go and find my maid.'

"He went to summon her. Then he disappeared.

"When she alighted at some station for luncheon she saw him at a distance looking at her. They finally arrived at Mentone."

II.

The doctor was silent for a second, and then resumed:

"One day, while I was receiving patients in my office, a tall young man entered. He said to me:

"'Doctor, I have come to ask you news of the Countess Marie Baranow. I am a friend of her husband, although she does not know me.'

"I answered:

"'She is lost. She will never return to Russia.'

"And suddenly this man began to sob, then he rose and went out, staggering like a drunken man.

"I told the Countess that evening that a stranger had come to make inquiries about her health. She seemed moved, and told me the story which I have just related to you. She added:

"'That man, whom I do not know at all, follows me now like my shadow. I meet him every time I go out. He looks at me in a strange way, but he has never spoken to me!'

"She pondered a moment, then added:

"'Come, I'll wager that he is under the window now.'

"She left her reclining-chair, went to the window and drew back the curtain, and actually showed me the man who had come to see me, seated on a bench at the edge of the side wall with his eyes raised toward the house. He perceived us, rose, and went away without once turning around.

"Then I understood a sad and surprising thing, the mute love of these two beings, who were not acquainted with each other.

"He loved her with the devotion of a rescued animal, grateful and devoted to the death. He came every day to ask me, 'How is she?' understanding that I had guessed his feelings. And he wept frightfully when he saw her pass, weaker and paler every day.

"She said to me:

"'I have never spoken but once to that singular man, and yet it seems as if I had known him for twenty years.'

"And when they met she returned his bow with a serious and charming smile. I felt that—although she was given up, and knew herself lost—she was happy to be loved thus, with this respect and constancy, with this exaggerated poetry, with this devotion, ready for anything.

"Nevertheless, faithful to her superexcited obstinacy, she absolutely refused to learn his name, to speak to him. She said:

"'No, no, that would spoil this strange friendship. We must remain strangers to each other.'

"As for him, he was certainly a kind of Don Quixote, for he did nothing to bring himself closer to her. He intended to keep to the end the absurd promise never to speak to her which he had made in the car.

"Often, during her long hours of weakness, she rose from her reclining-chair and partly opened the curtain to see whether he were there, beneath the window. And when she had seen him, ever motion-

less upon his bench, she came back to lie down again with a smile upon her lips.

"She died one morning about ten o'clock.

"As I left the house he came to me, his countenance showing that he had already learned the news.

"'I would like to see her, for a second, in your presence,' said he.

"I took him by the arm and we entered the house together.

"When he was beside the bed of the dead woman, he seized her hand and gave it a long and passionate kiss; then he went away like a man bereft of his senses."

The doctor again was silent. Then he resumed:

"There you have, certainly, the most singular railroad adventure that I know. It must also be said that men are queer lunatics."

A woman murmured in a low tone:

"Those two people were less crazy than you think. They were—they were—"

But she could speak no longer because she was weeping. As the conversation was changed to calm her, no one ever knew what she had intended to say.

PROWESS

SINCE his entrance into France, with the army of the invasion, Walter Schnaffs judged himself the most unfortunate of men. He was large, marched with difficulty, puffed much, and suffered frightfully with his feet, which were very broad and fat. Outwardly, he seemed peaceful and benevolent, neither brave nor bloodthirsty, the father of four children whom he adored, and married to a young, blond woman whose caresses and cares and tenderness he missed sadly every evening. He loved to rise late and go to bed early, to eat slowly of good things and drink beer in beer-cellars. He felt that all that was sweet in existence disappeared with that kind of life; and he had at heart a terrible fear and hatred, both instinctive and reasonable, of cannons, guns, revolvers, and swords, and especially, of bayonets, feeling himself incapable of maneuvering rapidly enough to defend his great body with such a weapon.

And, when night had come and he had lain down to sleep upon the earth, wrapped in his blanket at

the side of his comrades, who were snoring, he thought long of his home, left behind, and of the dangers sown all along the route. "If I should be killed what would become of the little ones?" he thought, "Who would feed them and bring them up?" It was certain they were not rich, in spite of the debts he had contracted before he started, in order to leave them a little money. And Walter Schnaffs wept many times.

At the beginning of a battle he felt his knees growing so weak that he thought he must fall, even had he known that the whole army would pass over his body. The whistling of the balls caused the hair upon his skin to rise. For some months he lived thus, in terror and in anguish.

His corps of the army was advancing toward Normandy. One day he was sent out to reconnoiter with a small detachment which was simply to explore a part of the country and report immediately. All seemed calm in the country; nothing indicated a prepared resistance.

The Prussians were descending quietly into a little valley which joined some deep ravines, when a violent fusillade stopped them short, throwing down one in twenty of their men; and one company of French shooters, coming out suddenly from a little wood, plunged forward with their bayonets in their guns.

Walter Schnaffs remained motionless at first, so surprised and dismayed that he did not even think of fleeing. Then a foolish desire to run seized him; but he thought immediately that he could run only like a tortoise in comparison with the thin Frenchmen,

who were coming on in leaps, like a troop of wild goats. Then, perceiving but six steps before him a large ditch full of brushwood covered with dead leaves, he jumped in with both feet, without thinking how deep it was even, as one might jump from a bridge into a river. He passed, after the fashion of a dart, through a thick layer of limbs and sharp twigs, which tore his face and hands as he fell, and found himself seated heavily on a bed of stones. Raising his eyes, he could see the sky through the hole that he had made. This hole might lead to his discovery, and he dragged himself along cautiously, on all fours, at the bottom of this ditch, under a roof of enlaced branches, going with all speed possible as far as he could from the combat. Then he stopped and seated himself, crouching like a hare in the midst of the dry branches.

For some time longer he heard the reports of the guns and the cries of the wounded, then the clamor of the struggle grew feebler and finally ceased. All became still and calm.

Suddenly something moved near him. He had a fearful shock. It was a little bird, which, standing upon a branch, had shaken the dry leaves. For nearly an hour, the man's heart beat with heavy, pressing blows on account of the bird's movement.

Night came on, filling the ravine with shadows. The soldier began to think. What was he going to do? What would become of him? Should he rejoin his army? But how? And where? Was it necessary to begin over again the life of anguish, of fear, of fatigue and suffering that he had led since the beginning of the war? No! He would never have

the courage. He would never have the energy necessary to support the marches and confront the dangers of each minute.

But what was to be done? He could not remain in this ravine and conceal himself there until the end of hostilities. Certainly not. If he were not obliged to eat, this prospect might not be too dejecting; but he must eat and eat every day.

Thus he found himself alone, in arms, in uniform, in the enemy's territory, far from those able to defend him. Cold shivers ran through his body. Suddenly he thought: "If only I were a prisoner!" And his heart trembled with the desire, a violent, immoderate desire to be a French prisoner. He would be safely lodged and fed, under shelter from balls and swords, without possible apprehension, in a good prison well guarded. A prisoner! What a dream!

His resolution was taken immediately: "I will go and give myself up as a prisoner." He got up and resolved to execute his project without delaying a minute. But he remained there, suddenly assailed by cowardly reflections and new fears.

Where should he go to give himself up? And how? On which side? And frightful images of death came into his soul. He might run some terrible dangers in venturing out alone through the country in his metal-pointed cap. If he should meet some farmers? These farmers, seeing a Prussian soldier lost, a Prussian without defense, would kill him like a stray dog! They would murder him, with their forks, their pickaxes, their scythes, their shovels! They would boil him and make a pie of him, with the delight of exasperated conquerors.

And if he should meet some French shooters? These, enraged, without law or discipline, would shoot him to amuse themselves, to pass away an hour in laughing and looking at his head. And he could already imagine himself against a wall in the face of a dozen gun barrels, whose little round, black holes seemed to be looking at him.

And if he should meet the French army? The advance guard would take him for a spy, for some brave and hardy rogue of a trooper sent out alone to reconnoiter, and would shoot him down at once. And he could hear already the irregular reports of the guns of soldiers concealed in the woods, while he, about midway of a field, would be riddled with balls like a skimmer, and he could feel them entering his flesh. He sat down again in despair. His situation appeared to have no exit.

Night had now come, the night still and dark. He could no longer move, and started at every unknown noise which passed in the shadows. A rabbit, striking himself on the edge of his burrow, almost put Walter Schnaffs to flight. The cries of the screech-owl tore his soul, rending it with sudden fear, sounding sad, as if it were wounded. He stared with his great eyes, trying to penetrate the shadows; and he imagined every moment that he heard some one coming near him.

After seemingly interminable hours of the anguish of the damned, he perceived through his ceiling of branches that the sky had become clear. Then immense relief came to him; his members relaxed in sudden repose; his heart was easy; his eyes closed. He slept.

When he awoke, the sun seemed to him to be nearly in the middle of the sky; it should, therefore be midday. No noise troubled the dull peace of the fields; and Walter Schnaffs perceived that he was attacked by acute hunger. He yawned, his mouth watering with the thought of sausage, the soldier's good sausage, and his stomach began to trouble him.

He got up, took some steps, felt that his limbs were feeble, and sat down again for reflection. For three or four hours more he argued for and against, changing his mind every moment, unhappy, drawn to one side and the other by reasons the most contrary.

One idea seemed to him logical and practical: that was to make his way to some one of the village people, alone, without arms or tools for dangerous deeds, running before him and putting himself in his hands—making him comprehend that he was giving himself up. Then he removed his cap, the point of which might betray him, and put his head out of his hole with infinite precaution.

Not another isolated being showed himself on the horizon. Down there, at the right, a little village sent to the sky the smoke from its roofs, the smoke from its kitchens! At the left, he perceived at the end of an avenue of trees, a great castle flanked with turrets. He waited until evening, suffering frightfully, seeing nothing but flocks of crows, and feeling the pangs of hunger growing sharper every moment.

Again the night fell upon him. He stretched himself out at the bottom of his retreat and fell asleep with a feverish sleep, haunted by nightmares, the sleep of a famished man. Aurora again

raised herself above his head. He took another observation. The country was as empty as at evening. And a new fear entered the mind of Walter Schnaffs—the fear of dying of hunger. He saw himself extended at the bottom of that hole, on his back, his eyes closed. Then some animals, little animals of every sort, would come and begin to eat his dead body, attacking him all together, slipping in under his garments to eat of the cool flesh. And a great raven would pick his eyes out with his sharp beak.

Then he became mad, imagining that he was swooning from weakness and could no longer walk. And now he started toward the village, resolved to dare all, to brave all; but he perceived three peasants coming to the fields with their forks on their shoulders, and he plunged back into his hiding-place.

When evening obscured the plain again, he went out slowly from the ditch, and started on the way, bent, fearing, his heart beating, toward the far-off castle, preferring to enter that than the village, which seemed to him as dangerous as a hole full of tigers.

The lower windows were brilliantly lighted, one of them being open; and a strong odor of food, cooked food, came from it, entering Walter Schnaffs's nostrils and penetrating to the depths of his body. It pulled him, drew him irresistibly, throwing into his heart a desperate audacity. And suddenly, without reflection, he appeared in his cap at the window-casing.

Eight domestics were dining around a great table. All at once a maid sat still with her mouth open, letting her glass fall, her eyes fixed. Then, all looks followed hers.

They perceived the enemy! My God! The Prussians are attacking the castle!

At first this was a single cry, made up of eight cries in eight different tones, a cry of horrible fear, then there was a tumultuous moving, a *mêlée*, a general flight for the farthest door. Chairs fell, men knocked over the women to get ahead of them. In two seconds the place was empty, abandoned, with a table covered with eatables in the face of Walter Schnaffs, who stood still in amazement outside the window.

After some moments of hesitation, he jumped over the wall, breast high, and advanced toward the plates. His exasperating hunger made him tremble like one in a fever; but a terror still held him and paralyzed him. He listened. The whole house seemed to tremble; doors opened and shut, and rapid steps sounded on the floor above. The Prussian, disturbed, lent an ear to these confused noises; then he heard a heavy sound as of a body falling in the soft earth at the foot of the wall, a human body jumping from the first story.

Then all movement, all agitation ceased, and the great castle became silent as a tomb.

Walter Schnaffs seated himself before a plate still intact, and began to eat. He ate with great mouthfuls as if he feared being interrupted too soon, before he had devoured enough. He threw the pieces with both hands into his mouth, opened like a trap; packages of nourishment descended into his stomach, stroke upon stroke, enlarging his throat in passing. Sometimes he interrupted himself, ready to burst, like a pipe too full. He took the pitcher and poured its

contents down his throat, as one washes out a stopped-up conduit.

He emptied all the dishes, all the plates, and all the bottles; then, full of liquid and eatables, besotted, red, shaking with hiccoughs, his mouth greasy, his mind troubled, he unbuttoned his uniform in order to breathe, incapable of taking another step. His eyes closed, his ideas became vague; he dropped his heavy head in his crossed arms on the table, and sweetly lost all consciousness of his surroundings.

The waning crescent showed the horizon vaguely through the trees of the park. It was the cold hour which precedes the day. Sometimes a ray of the moon glittered like a point of steel among the shadows of the thicket.

The quiet castle appeared like a great, black silhouette against the clear sky. Two windows alone on the ground floor were still brilliantly lighted. Suddenly, a voice of thunder cried:

"Hey, there! Now forward! The assault! Come now! Devil take 'em!"

Then, in an instant, the doors, entrances, even the windows, were flooded with an outpouring of men who rushed in, breaking and overturning all in their way, surrounding the house—fifty men, armed to the teeth, bounded, in an instant, into the kitchen where Walter Schnaffs was peacefully reposing; and, presenting to his breast their loaded guns, they seized him, rolled him over, threw him down, and bound him hand and foot.

He awoke perplexed, too much amazed to comprehend, dull, paralyzed with fear. Suddenly a great,

military-looking man, covered with gold lace, planted his foot upon his body, calling out vociferously:

"You are my prisoner! Surrender!"

The Prussian understood only the single word "prisoner," and groaned: "Ja, ja, ja!"

He was taken up, bound to a chair, and examined with a lively curiosity by his conquerors, who puffed like porpoises. Many of them sat down, overcome by emotion and fatigue.

He smiled; he could smile now, sure of finally being a prisoner!

An officer entered and announced:

"Colonel, the enemy is put to flight. Many of them appear to have been wounded. We can now restore the place to its master."

The great military man, wiping his brow, shouted: "Victory!" And, drawing a little notebook from his pocket, he wrote:

"After a sharp struggle, the Prussians have beaten a retreat, taking their dead and wounded with them, estimated at about fifty men. Some remain in our hands."

A young officer inquired: "Colonel, what measures are to be taken?"

The colonel replied: "In order to avoid a return of the enemy, we will fall back to the artillery and the superior forces." And he gave the order to set out.

The colonel re-formed his line in shadow under the wall of the castle, surrounding, with great care, Walter Schnaffs, bound, and guarded by six soldiers with revolvers in hand. Some reconnoiterers were sent out to clear the route. They advanced with

prudence, halting from time to time. At daylight, they arrived at the Subprefect's, in Roche-Oysel, whose national guard had accomplished this feat of arms.

The people of the town, anxious and excited, awaited them. When they saw the prisoner's cap, a formidable noise began. Women lifted up their hands, old people wept, a grandfather threw his crutch at the Prussian and wounded the nose of one of his guards. The colonel shouted: "Look out for the safety of the prisoner!"

Finally, they came to the townhouse. The prison was opened, and Walter Schnaffs was thrown in, freed from his fetters. Two hundred men, in arms, were upon guard about the building.

Then, in spite of the symptoms of indigestion which had troubled him for some time, the Prussian, mad with joy, began to dance; he danced desperately, raising his arms and legs and uttering frenzied cries, until he fell exhausted at the foot of the wall. He was a prisoner! "Safe!"

And thus it was that the castle of Champignet was retaken from the enemy after only six hours of occupation.

Colonel Ratier, cloth merchant, who accomplished this feat at the head of the National Guards, was decorated for it.

MILITARY HONORS

THERE was no noise in the forest except the light trembling of the snow falling upon the trees. It had fallen since midday: a soft, fine snow which powdered the branches with a glittering moss and threw upon the dead leaves of the thicket a covering of silver, spreading along the way an immense carpet, soft and white, and making still greater the illimitable silence in this ocean of trees.

Before the door of the forest house a young woman with bare arms was cutting wood, between the heavy blows of the ax and a great stone. She was tall, thin, and strong, a daughter of the forest, daughter and wife of foresters.

A voice cried from the interior of the house: "We are alone to-night, Berthine, you must come in, for it is getting dark and the Prussians or wolves may be prowling around."

The woodcutter responded, striking a stump a great blow and then another, which obliged her to straighten her neck at each movement of the arms:

"I have finished, mamma. I'm coming, I'm coming, have no fear; it is still day."

Then she entered with some fagots and the logs of wood and piled them up beside the fireplace, going out again to close the outer doors, enormous doors of the heart of oak, and finally came in and pushed the bolts.

Her mother was knitting before the fire, a wrinkled old woman whom age had rendered full of fear. "I do not like it when your father is away," said she. "Two women are not very strong."

The young woman answered: "Oh! I could kill a wolf or a Prussian, the one as well as the other."

And she cast her eye at a large revolver hanging above the hearth. Her husband had been drafted into the army at the beginning of the Prussian invasion, and the two women were left alone with the father, the old keeper, Nicholas Pichon, called "Longlegs," who had absolutely refused to leave his dwelling and go into the town.

The nearest town was Rethel, an old stronghold perched upon a rock. They were patriotic there; and the citizens, having decided to resist the invaders, had shut themselves up in their houses for a siege, according to the traditions of the city. Twice already, under Henry IV. and under Louis XIV., the inhabitants of Rethel had distinguished themselves for their heroic defense. They could do it again this time, be sure of that! or they would let themselves be burned within their walls.

So, they had bought some cannons and some guns, equipped a militia, formed some battalions and companies and drilled them every day in the square. Everybody, bakers, grocers, woodcutters, notaries, attorneys, carpenters, librarians, chemists even, took turns in the rôle at regular hours under the orders of Monsieur Lavigne, a former sub-officer of dragoons, now a merchant, having married the daughter and inherited the shop of the elder Monsieur Ravaudan.

He took the rank of major, and as all the young men were away in the army, he enrolled all others who had any power of resistance. The large ones were no longer in the streets but were now always in the gymnasium trying to reduce their fat and prolong their breath, the weak striving to increase their strength and harden their muscles.

And now they were waiting for the Prussians. But the Prussians nowhere appeared. They were not far off, nevertheless; for twice already their spies had pushed across the woods as far as the house of Nicholas Pichon, the forester, called "Longlegs."

The old keeper, who could run like a fox, had come to warn the town. The cannons were pointed but the enemy did not show itself. The dwelling of the forester, in the Aveline forest, served as an outpost of the citizen soldiers. And Nicholas, twice a week, went for provisions and brought the news of the surrounding country.

He had set out on this particular day to announce that a small detachment of German infantry had stopped at his house on the day before, toward two o'clock in the afternoon, and had immediately gone away again. The sub-officer could speak French.

When the old man left home, he always led with him his two big dogs, with jaws like lions, from fear of the wolves, which were beginning to be ferocious, and left the two women to depend upon barricading themselves in the house at the approach of night. The young woman was afraid of nothing, but her mother was always afraid, saying:

"It will end badly, all this. You will see that it will end badly."

On this particular evening she was more disturbed than usual:

"Do you know what time your father will return?" she asked.

"Oh! not before eleven o'clock, surely. When he dines with the Commander, he always returns late."

And she was about to put her saucepan over the fire to make the soup, when she stopped short, listening to a vague noise that seemed to come through the chimney.

She murmured: "There is somebody walking through the woods, as many as seven or eight men, at least."

The mother, frightened, stopped her spinning, stammering:

"Oh! Lord-'a-mercy! and your father is not here yet."

She had not finished speaking when violent blows made the door tremble. As the women did not respond, a strong guttural voice cried:

"Oben!" Then after a silence, the same voice continued: "Oben, or I will preak the door."

Then Berthine slid into the pocket of her skirt the

great revolver and, having placed her ear against the crack of the door, asked:

"Who are you?"

The voice responded: "I am the tetachment of the other day."

The young woman asked: "What is it you wish?"

"I am lost since this morning in the woods, with my tetachment. Oben, or I preak the door down."

The forest woman had no choice; she quickly slipped the great bolt, then drawing back the heavy folding door, she perceived in the pale light of the snow six men, Prussian soldiers, the same that were there the day before. In a resolute tone she asked:

"Why have you come here at this hour?"

The sub-officer answered: "I am lost, entirely lost, and I regognized the house. I have had nothing to eat since morning, no more has my tetachment."

Berthine declared: "It happens that I am all alone with my mother this evening."

The soldier, who appeared to be an honest fellow, answered: "That is no matter. I shall do no harm, but you will gif us something to eat. We are dying of hunger and fatigue."

The woman of the forest drew back, saying: "Enter."

They entered, powdered with snow, carrying on their helmets a kind of creamy moss, which made them look as if covered with meringue. They seemed weary and exhausted.

The young woman showed them wooden benches beside the large table. "Sit down," she said, "it is

true that you are worn out. I am going to make soup for you."

Then she replaced the bolts of the door. Again she took up the saucepan, threw in some butter and some potatoes, then taking down a piece of bacon that hung in the chimney, she cut off half and plunged it into the water.

The six men followed every motion, with an awakened hunger in their eyes. They had placed their guns and their helmets in the corner, and were waiting, with as wise a look as children on school benches.

The mother began to spin again, casting every moment a look at the invaders. Nothing could be heard but the light rumble of the wheel and the crackling of the fire and the murmur of the boiling water.

But suddenly a strange noise made them all tremble, something like a raucous breath under the door, strong and wheezing. The German officer made a bound for his gun. The forester's daughter stopped him with a gesture, smiling: "It is the wolves," said she. "They are like you, they are wandering around and are hungry."

The man, incredulous, wished to see for himself, and as soon as the outer door was opened, he perceived two great gray beasts running away at a rapid trot. He returned, and murmured as he sat down:

"I would not haf pelieved it." And he waited till his supper was ready.

They ate voraciously, with mouths open to the ears in order to swallow more at a time, their round

eyes opening wide in unison with the jaw, and a noise in their throats like the gurgling in a rain-spout.

The two silent women watched the rapid movements of their great red beards, the potatoes having the appearance of forcing themselves into the moving fleece. And as they were thirsty, the daughter of the forest descended to the cellar to draw some cider. She was there a long time. It was a little arched cave which, during the Revolution, was said to have served as a prison and a place of concealment. It was reached by means of a flight of steep steps which closed with a trapdoor at the end of the kitchen.

When Berthine reappeared, she laughed to herself with a sly air. And she gave to the Germans her pitcher of drink. Then she ate her supper, with her mother, at the other end of the kitchen.

The soldiers had finished eating and were asleep, all six of them, about the table. From time to time, a head would fall upon the board with a heavy sound, then the man, brusquely awakened, would sit up again.

Berthine said to the officer: "Lie down before the fire, pray, there is room enough there for six. As for me, I shall climb up to my room with my mother."

And the two women mounted to the loft. They were heard locking the door and walking about for some time; then there was no more sound.

The Prussians stretched out upon the floor, feet to the fire, their heads supported by their knapsacks, and soon were snoring, all six of them, in six different tones, weak or sonorous, but continued and formidable.

They must have been asleep a long time when a gunshot resounded, so powerful that one would believe it had been fired into the walls of the house. The soldiers were on their feet in an instant. Again two shots were heard, followed by three others.

The door at the staircase opened suddenly and the forester's daughter appeared, barefooted, in a chemise and a short petticoat, a candle in her hand, with an air of fright.

"Here are the French," she stammered, "at least two hundred of them. If they find you here they will burn the house. Go down into the cellar quickly, and make no noise. If you make any noise, we are lost."

The officer, much frightened, murmured: "I will so, I will so, but where can we descend?"

The young woman raised the trapdoor with haste, and the six men disappeared by the little flight of steps, forcing themselves into the hole one after the other, backward, testing each step with the feet.

When the point of the last helmet had disappeared, Berthine replaced the heavy plank of oak, thick as a wall, hard as steel, held in place by some hinges and a dungeon lock, of which she gave two long turns to the key, and then she laughed, a mute, triumphant laugh, with a mad desire to dance over the heads of the prisoners.

They made no noise, shut in there as in a solid box of stone, receiving the air only from the vent-hole, which was protected by bars of iron.

Berthine immediately relighted the fire, put on the saucepan again, and made some more soup, murmuring: "Father will be tired to-night." Then she sat

down and waited. The pendulum of the clock, going back and forth with its regular ticktack, alone broke the silence.

From time to time the young woman cast a look at the dial, an impatient look which seemed to say: "You don't go quickly enough!"

But soon there seemed to be a murmuring under her feet. Some low, confused words came to her through the arch of the cellar. The Prussians had surmised her ruse, and the officer now mounted the steps and began to pound on the trapdoor with his fists. He cried anew: "Oben!"

She got up and approached him, imitating his accent:

"What iss it you vant?"

"Oben!"

"I vill not oben."

The man was angry. "Oben or I vill preak the door."

She began to laugh. "Break, my good man, break," she said.

He began to strike with his gun upon the oaken trapdoor closed over his head. But it would have resisted the blows of a catapult.

The woman of the forest heard him descend again. Then the soldiers came, one after the other, to try their strength and inspect the opening. But, without doubt judging their attempts useless, they descended again into the cellar and began to talk among themselves.

The young woman listened to them, and then she opened the outside door and hearkened out into the night. She heard a barking afar off. She whistled as

a hunter does, and presently two enormous dogs bounded out of the shadow upon her, frisking about in joy. She seized them by the neck and hindered them from running, crying with all her force:

"Oh! Father!"

A voice afar off responded: "Berthine!"

She waited a few seconds, then repeated:

"Oh! Father!"

The voice nearer repeated:

"Oh! Berthine!"

The daughter shouted: "Don't pass before the venthole. There are Prussians in the cellar."

And suddenly the great silhouette of a man outlined itself at the left, stopped between the trunks of two trees, and a voice cried hurriedly:

"Prussians in the cellar? What are they doing there?"

The young woman began to laugh: "They are those of yesterday," she answered. "They were lost in the forest, and I have put them in the cellar to keep fresh."

And she related the adventure, how she had frightened them with the shots from the revolver and shut them up.

The old man gravely asked: "What do you want me to do now?"

She answered: "Go and get Monsieur Lavigne with his troops. He will take them prisoners. That will please him greatly."

And father Pichon smiled: "It is true, it would please him."

His daughter continued: "Take some soup, eat quickly, and then go."

The old keeper seated himself and began to eat, after placing two platefuls on the floor for the dogs.

The Prussians, hearing them talk, were silent.

Father "Longlegs" set out a quarter of an hour later, and Berthine waited, her head in her hands.

The prisoners began to stir again. They now cried out, they called, and beat furiously against the unbreakable trapdoor with their guns, unceasingly. Then they began to shoot off their guns through the venthole, hoping without doubt to be heard by some German detachment that might be passing in the neighborhood.

The forester's daughter did not move. But all this noise unnerved and irritated her. A wicked anger awoke in her; she wished to assassinate them, the scoundrels, in order to make them silent. Then, as her impatience grew, she fell to watching the clock and counting the minutes.

Her father had been gone an hour and a half. He had now reached the town. She believed she saw him. He was relating the story to Monsieur Lavigne, who paled with emotion and rung up his maid to get his uniform and his arms. She heard, it seemed to her, the drum as it went beating through the streets. Frightened heads appeared at the windows. The citizen soldiers came out of their houses, scarcely clothed, breathless, buckling their belts, and running, at gymnastic pace, toward the house of their commander.

Then the troop, "Longlegs" at the head, began to march, through the snow toward the forest. She looked at the clock. "They can get here in an hour," she thought.

A nervous impatience took possession of her. The minutes seemed interminable.

Finally, the time that she had fixed for arrival was marked by the clock. Again she opened the door to see whether she could hear them approaching. She perceived a shadow moving with precaution. She was frightened and uttered a cry. It was her father. He said:

"They sent me ahead to see if anything had changed."

"No, nothing."

Then he sent into the night air a prolonged and strident whistle. And immediately something dark came toward him, approaching slowly from the shadow of trees: it was the advance guard of ten men.

"Longlegs" called out instantly: "Do not pass before the venthole."

Then the first detachment showed to the next the dangerous venthole. Finally, the whole troop showed itself, two hundred men in all, each carrying two hundred cartridges.

Monsieur Lavigne, disturbed and trembling, placed them in such a way as to watch the house and leave a large free space before the little black hole where the sod was cleared to give air to the cellar.

Then he entered the dwelling and informed himself with regard to the force and attitude of the enemy, now so mute that one could have believed that they had disappeared, vanished, escaped through the venthole.

Monsieur Lavigne struck the trapdoor and called: "Mr. Prussian officer!"

The German did not answer.

The commander repeated: "Mr. Prussian officer!"

It was in vain. For twenty minutes he summoned this silent officer to surrender his arms and baggage, promising to spare his life and the lives of his men, and military honors for him and his soldiers. But he obtained no sign of consent or of hostility. The situation was becoming difficult.

The citizen soldiers stamped their feet in the snow, struck their shoulders great blows with their arms, like cabmen trying to keep warm, and looked at the venthole with a growing and childish desire to pass before it.

One of them, finally, Potdevin by name, took the hazard, as he was very swift. He made a leap and ran past it like a deer. The feat was a success. The prisoners seemed dead.

One voice cried: "There is no one there."

And then another soldier crossed the free space before the dangerous hole. Then it was like a game. From minute to minute some man would throw himself past the troop, as children play jumping bars, hurling behind them lumps of snow from their swiftly moving feet. For comfort, some one lighted a great fire of dead wood, which seemed to illuminate this profile of the national guard in its rapid journey from the camp on the right to the camp on the left.

Some one cried: "Now you, Maloison!"

Maloison was a big baker whose rotundity was a source of laughter to his comrades. He hesitated. They teased him. Then, straightening up, he started, with the little, regular, gymnastic step, puffing so that it shook his powerful corporosity.

All the detachment laughed until they cried. To encourage him, they called out: "Bravo, bravo, Maloison!"

He had made about two thirds of his distance when a long flame, rapid and red, sprang out of the venthole. A report sounded, and the vast body of the baker fell face downward, while he gave a frightful cry.

No one dared go to his aid. They saw him dragging himself along on all fours, in the glistening snow, and, when he had passed the terrible opening, he vanished.

He had received a ball in the thick part of the thigh, but near the surface.

After the first surprise and the first fright, a new laugh went round. But Commander Lavigne appeared upon the doorsill of the forest house. He came to stop his plan of attack. In a vibrating voice, he commanded:

"The zinc-worker and his workmen come here."

Three men approached.

"Unfasten the gutters of the house."

In a quarter of an hour they had carried to the commander twenty meters of gutter pipe. Then he made them, with a thousand precautions, fit one into a little round hole in the edge of the trapdoor, and, attaching a pipe from the pump to this conduit, he declared, with an enchanted air:

"Now we are going to drink to the health of these German gentlemen."

A frenzied hurrah of admiration went up, followed by shouts of joy and wild laughter. The com-

mander organized squads for the work, who should relieve each other every five minutes. Then he gave the order:

"Pump!"

The iron handle having been put in motion, a little sound glided along the length of pipe and fell into the cellar with the murmur of a cascade.

They listened. One hour passed, then two, then three.

The commander walked about the kitchen in a feverish state of mind, placing his ear to the floor from time to time, seeking to find out what the enemy was doing, and asking himself if they were going to capitulate.

Now the enemy was moving about. They heard them moving the barrels and talking. Then, toward eight o'clock in the morning, a voice came from the venthole:

"I vish to speak to the French officer."

Lavigne responded from the window, without putting his head too far out: "What do you wish?"

"I surrender myself."

"Pass out the guns, then."

And immediately a gun came out of the hole upon the snow, then two, three, and all the others. The same voice said:

"I hav no more. Hurry! I am drowning."

The commander ordered:

"Stop pumping."

The handle of the pump fell motionless. And, having filled the kitchen with soldiers armed to the teeth, he slowly raised the oaken trapdoor.

Four heads appeared, soaked, four blond heads

with long, pale hair; and they saw come out, rushing as if frightened, six Germans, shivering with cold.

They were seized and bound. Then, as they feared a surprise from another detachment, they formed into two convoys, one conducting the prisoners and the other carrying Maloison on a mattress placed upon poles.

They returned triumphant into Rethel.

Monsieur Lavigne was decorated for having captured an advance guard of the Prussians, and the great baker received a military medal for wounds received before the enemy.

SEMILLANTE

THE widow of Paolo Saverini lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the ramparts of Bonifacio. The town, built upon the side of the mountain, suspended in spots above the sea, overlooks, through a defile bristling with rocks, the lowest part of Sardinia. At its foot, on the other side, and almost entirely surrounding it, is a cut in the cliff, which resembles a gigantic corridor and serves as a port; it leads up to the first houses (after a long circuit between the two abrupt walls), the little Italian or Sardinian fishing-boats, and, every two weeks, the old, broken-winded steamer that plies between there and Ajaccio.

Upon the white mountain, the bunch of houses makes a spot whiter still. They have the appearance of nests of wild birds, fastened thus upon this rock, overlooking this terrible passageway where ships scarcely dare venture. The wind, without repose, harasses the sea, harasses the bare coast, which is

nibbled by it until it has but little vegetation; it rushes into the defile, whose two sides it strips bare. The track of pale foam, fastened to black points on the innumerable rocks which pierce the waves, has the look of bits of cloth floating and palpitating upon the surface of the water.

The house of the widow Saverini, soldered to the edge of the cliff, had three windows opening upon this wild and desolated horizon.

She lived there alone, with her son Antoine and their dog Semillante, a great, thin beast with long, coarse hair, of a race that watches the herds. This dog served the young man for hunting.

One evening, after a dispute, Antoine Saverini was killed traitorously with a blow of a knife by Nicholas Ravolati who, the same night, went over to Sardinia.

When the old woman received the body of her child, which some passers-by brought to her, she did not weep but remained a long time motionless, looking at him. Then, extending her wrinkled hand upon the dead body, she promised revenge. She did not wish anyone to remain with her, and she shut herself up with the body and the dog.

The dog howled. She howled, this beast, in a continuous fashion, at the foot of the bed, her head extended toward her master, her tail held fast between her legs. She no more stirred than did the mother, who, hanging now upon the body, her eyes fixed, was weeping great tears while gazing at him.

The young man, upon his back, clothed in his coat of gray cloth, torn and bloody about the breast, seemed to be asleep. And there was blood everywhere: on his shirt, drawn up in the first moments,

on his waistcoat, his trousers, upon his face, and his hands. Little clots of blood had coagulated in his beard and in his hair.

The old mother began to speak to him. At the sound of her voice, the dog was silent.

"Come, come," she said, "you shall be avenged, my little one, my boy, my poor child. Sleep, sleep, you shall be avenged, do you hear? It is your mother who promises! And she always keeps her word, does your mother, as you know well."

And gently she bent over him, gluing her cold lips to his dead mouth. Then Semillante began to groan again. She uttered a long, plaintive monotone, harrowing and terrible.

There they remained, the corpse, the woman and the beast, until morning.

Antoine Saverini was buried the next day, and soon no one spoke of him more in Bonifacio.

He had left no brother, no near relatives. There was no man to follow up the revenge. Alone, the mother thought of it, the old woman.

On the other side of the defile she saw, each morning and evening, a white spot on the coast. It was the little Sardinian village, Longosardo, where Corsican bandits took refuge when too closely pursued. They almost peopled this hamlet, opposite the shore of their own country, and awaited there the moment of returning, of going back again to the brakes. It was in this village, she knew, that Nicholas Ravolati had taken refuge.

All alone, the whole day long, seated before her window, she would look down there and think of

vengeance. How could she do it without anyone to help, infirm as she was and so near death? But she had promised, she had sworn it upon his dead body. She could not forget, she must not delay. How should she accomplish it? She could not sleep at night; she had no repose, no ease; she sought obstinately. The dog slept at her feet, and, sometimes raising her head, howled to the distance. Since her master was no longer there, she often howled thus, as if she were calling him, as if her soul, that of an inconsolable beast, had preserved a remembrance of him that nothing could efface.

One night, as Semillante began to howl in this way, the mother suddenly had an idea, a savage, vindictive, ferocious idea. She meditated upon it until morning; then, rising at the approach of day, she betook herself to the church. She prayed, prostrate upon the floor, humbled before God, supplicating him to aid her, to sustain her, to give to her poor, spent body force that would be sufficient to avenge the death of her son.

Then she returned. She had in her yard an old barrel with the head knocked in, which caught the rain from the gutters. She emptied it and turned it over, making it fast to the soil by means of some stakes and stones; then she chained Semillante in this niche and went into her house.

Now she walked about constantly in her room, without repose, her eye fixed upon the coast of Sardinia. He was down there, was that assassin.

The dog howled all day and all night. The old woman carried her some water in the morning, in a bowl. But nothing more; no soup, no bread.

The day slipped away. Semillante, weakened from want of food, slept. The next day she had shining eyes and bristling hair; she pulled desperately at her chain.

Still the old woman gave her nothing to eat. The beast became furious, baying with raucous voice. The night passed away thus. Then, at the break of day, Mother Saverini went to the house of a neighbor and begged him to give her two bundles of straw. She took some old clothes that her husband had formerly worn and filled them full of the fodder, to simulate a human body.

Having stuck a stick in the ground before Semillante's niche, she bound the manikin to it, giving him the appearance of standing. Then she formed a head by means of a package of old linen.

The dog, surprised, looked at the straw man and was silent, although devoured with hunger.

Then the old woman went to the butcher's and bought a long piece of black pudding. She returned home, lighted a wood fire in her yard, and cooked this pudding. Semillante, excited, bounded about and frothed at the mouth, her eyes fixed upon the meat, the fumes of which entered her stomach.

Next the woman made a cravat for the straw man of this smoking sausage. She wound it many times about his neck, as if to make it penetrate him. When this was done, she unchained the dog.

With a formidable leap, the beast reached the manikin's throat, and, her paws upon his shoulders, began to tear him to pieces. She fell back, a piece of her prey in her mouth, then leaped upon him again, sinking her teeth in the cords, snatching some

particles of nourishment, fell back again, and rebounded enraged. She tore away the face with great blows of the teeth, tearing into shreds the whole neck.

The old woman, mute and motionless, looked on, her eyes lighting up. She rechained the beast, made him fast two days again, and repeated this strange operation.

For three months, she accustomed the dog to this kind of struggle, to a repast conquered by tooth and claw. She did not chain her now, but set her upon the manikin with a gesture.

She taught her to tear him, to devour him, even without anything eatable hung around his throat. She would give her afterward, as a recompense, the pudding she had cooked for her.

Whenever she perceived the manikin, Semillante growled and turned her eyes toward her mistress, who would cry: "Go!" in a whistling tone, at the same time raising her finger.

When she thought the right time had come, Mother Saverini went to confession and to communion one morning in ecstatic fervor; then, having clothed herself in male attire, so that she looked like a feeble, old man, she went with a Sardinian fisherman, who took her and her dog to the other side of the defile.

She had, in a sack of cloth, a large piece of pudding. Semillante had fasted for two days. Every few moments the old woman made her smell of the pleasant food and endeavored to excite her.

They entered into Longosardo. The Corsican went into a wine-shop. She presented herself at a baker's

[illegible] AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY P. SCHMAUS.

[illegible] the [illegible] with a gesture."

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and asked where Nicholas Ravolati lived. He had taken his old trade, that of a carpenter. He was working alone at the back of his shop.

The old woman opened the door and called:

"Hey, Nicholas!"

He turned around; then, loosing the dog, she cried out:

"Go! go! Devour him! devour him!"

The animal, excited, threw herself upon him and seized him by the throat. The man extended his arms, clinched her, and rolled upon the floor. For some minutes he twisted himself, beating the soil with his feet; then he remained motionless, while Semillante dug at his neck until it was in shreds.

Two neighbors, seated before their doors, recalled perfectly having seen an old man go out of the shop, with a black dog at his side, which was eating, as he went along, something brown that his master gave him.

That evening, the old woman returned to her house. She slept well that night.

ON THE RIVER

LAST summer I rented a cottage on the banks of the Seine, several miles from Paris, and I used to go out to it every evening. After a while, I formed the acquaintance of one of my neighbors, a man between thirty and forty years of age, who really was one of the queerest characters I ever have met. He was an old boating-man, crazy on the subject of boats, and was always either in, or on, or by the water. Surely he must have been born in a boat, and probably he will die in one, some day, while taking a last outing.

One evening, as we were walking along the edge of the river, I asked him to tell me about some of his nautical experiences. Immediately his face lighted up, and he became eloquent, almost poetical, for his heart was full of an all-absorbing, irresistible, devouring passion — a love for the river.

"Ah!" said he, "how many recollections I have of the river that flows at our feet! You street-dwellers have no idea what the river really is. But let a fisher-

man pronounce the word. To him it means mystery, the unknown, a land of mirage and phantasmagoria, where odd things that have no real existence are seen at night and strange noises are heard; where one trembles without knowing the reason why, as when passing through a cemetery,— and indeed the river is a cemetery without graves.

"Land, for a fisherman, has boundaries, but the river, on moonless nights, appears to him unlimited. A sailor doesn't feel the same way about the sea. The sea is often cruel, but it roars and foams, it gives us fair warning; the river is silent and treacherous. It flows stealthily, without a murmur, and the eternal gentle motion of the water is more awful to me than the big ocean waves.

"Dreamers believe that the deep hides immense lands of blue, where the drowned roll around among the big fish, in strange forests or in crystal caves. The river has only black depths, where the dead decay in the slime. But it's beautiful when the sun shines on it, and the waters splash softly on the banks covered with whispering reeds.

"In speaking of the ocean the poet says:

> "'Oh! what tragic tales of the vast, blue deep,—
> The vast blue deep prayerful mothers fear,—
> The sad waves tell, when at night, we hear,
> Their ceaseless moanings in our sleep!'

Well, I believe that the stories the slender reeds tell one another in their wee, silvery voices are even more appalling than the ghastly tragedies related by the roaring waves.

"But as you have asked me to relate some of my recollections, I will tell you a strange adventure that happened to me here, about ten years ago.

"Then, as now, I lived in old mother Lafon's house and a chum of mine, Louis Bernet, who since has given up boating, as well as his happy-go-lucky ways, to become a State Councilor, was camping out in the village of C——, two miles away. We used to take dinner together every day, either at his place or at mine.

"One evening, as I was returning home alone, feeling rather tired, and with difficulty rowing the twelve-foot boat that I always took out at night, I stopped to rest a little while near that point over there, formed by reeds, about two hundred yards in front of the railway bridge. The weather was gorgeous; the moon shed a silvery light on the shining river, and the air was soft and still. The calmness of the surroundings tempted me, and I thought how pleasant it would be to fill my pipe here and smoke. The thought was immediately executed, and, laying hold of the anchor, I dropped it overboard. The boat, which was following the stream, slid to the end of the chain and came to a stop; I settled myself aft on a rug, as comfortably as I could. There was not a sound to be heard nor a movement to be seen, though sometimes I noticed the almost imperceptible rippling of the water on the banks, and watched the highest clumps of reeds, which at times assumed strange shapes that appeared to move.

The river was perfectly calm, but I was affected by the extraordinary stillness that enveloped me. The frogs and toads, the nocturnal musicians of the

swamps, were voiceless. Suddenly, at my right, a frog croaked. I started; it stopped, and all was silent. I resolved to light my pipe for distraction. But, strange to say, though I was an inveterate smoker I failed to enjoy it, and after a few puffs I grew sick and stopped smoking. Then I began to hum an air, but the sound of my voice depressed me.

At last I lay down in the boat and watched the sky For a while I remained quiet, but presently the slight pitching of the boat disturbed me. I felt as if it were swaying to and fro from one side of the river to the other, and that an invisible force or being was drawing it slowly to the bottom and then raising it to let it drop again. I was knocked about as if in a storm; I heard strange noises; I jumped up; the water was shining and all was still. Then I knew that my nerves were slightly shaken, and decided to leave the river. I pulled on the chain. The boat moved along, but presently I felt some resistance and pulled harder. The anchor refused to come up; it had caught in something at the bottom and remained stuck. I pulled and tugged but to no avail. With the oars I turned the boat around and forced her up-stream, in order to alter the position of the anchor. This was all in vain, however, for the anchor did not yield; so in a rage, I began to shake at the chain, which wouldn't budge.

I sat down discouraged, to ponder over my mishap. It was impossible to break the chain or to separate it from the boat, as it was enormous and was riveted to a piece of wood as big as my arm; but as the weather continued fine, I did not doubt but that some fisherman would come along and rescue me. The

accident calmed me so much that I managed to remain quiet and smoke my pipe. I had a bottle of rum with me so I drank two or three glasses of it and began to laugh at my situation. It was so warm that it would not have mattered much had I been obliged to spend all night out of doors.

Suddenly something jarred slightly against the side of the boat. I started, and a cold sweat broke over me from head to foot. The noise was due to a piece of wood drifting along with the current, but it proved sufficient to disturb my mind, and once more I felt the same strange nervousness creep over me. The anchor remained firm. Exhausted, I seated myself again.

"Meantime the river was covering itself with a white mist that lay close to the water, so that when I stood up neither the stream, nor my feet, nor the boat, were visible to me; I could distinguish only the ends of the reeds and, a little further away, the meadow, ashen in the moonlight, with large black patches formed by groups of Italian poplars reaching toward the sky. I was buried up to my waist in something that looked like a blanket of down of a peculiar whiteness; and all kinds of fantastic visions arose before me. I imagined that some one was trying to crawl into the boat, which I could no longer see and that the river hidden under the thick fog was full of strange creatures that were swimming all around me. I felt a horrible depression steal over me, my temples throbbed, my heart beat wildly, and, losing all control over myself, I was ready to plunge overboard and swim to safety. But this idea suddenly filled me with horror. I imagined myself lost in the

dense mist, floundering about aimlessly among the reeds and water-plants, unable to find the banks of the river or the boat; and I felt as if I should certainly be drawn by my feet to the bottom of the dark waters. As I really should have had to swim against the current for at least five hundred yards before reaching a spot where I could safely land, it was nine chances to ten that, being unable to see in the fog, I should drown, although I was a fine swimmer.

"I tried to overcome my dread. I determined not to be afraid, but there was something in me besides my will and that something was faint-hearted. I asked myself what there was to fear; my courageous self railed at the other, the timid one; never before had I so fully realized the opposition that exists between the two beings we have in us; the one willing, the other resisting, and each one triumphing in turn. But this foolish and unaccountable fear was growing worse and worse, and was becoming positive terror. I remained motionless, with open eyes and straining ears, waiting. For what? I scarcely knew, but it must have been for something terrible. I believe that had a fish suddenly taken it into its head to jump out of the water, as frequently happens, I should have fallen in a dead faint. However, I managed to keep my senses after a violent effort to control myself. I took my bottle of brandy and again raised it to my lips.

"Suddenly I began to shout at the top of my voice, turning successively toward the four points of the horizon. After my throat had become completely paralyzed with shouting, I listened. A dog was barking in the distance.

"I drank some more rum and lay down in the bottom of the boat. I remained thus at least one hour, perhaps two, without shutting my eyes, visited by nightmares. I did not dare to sit up, though I had an insane desire to do so; I put it off from second to second, saying: 'Now then, I'll get up,' but I was afraid to move. At last I raised myself with infinite care, as if my life depended on the slightest sound I might make, and peered over the edge of the boat. I was greeted by the most marvelous, stupendous sight that it is possible to imagine. It was a vision of fairyland, one of those phenomena that travelers in distant countries tell us about, but that we are unable to believe.

"The mist, which two hours ago hung over the water, had lifted and settled on the banks of the stream. It formed on each side an unbroken hill, six or seven yards in height, that shone in the moonlight with the dazzling whiteness of snow. Nothing could be seen but the flashing river, moving between the two white mountains, and overhead a full moon that illuminated the milky-blue sky.

"All the hosts of the water had awakened; the frogs were croaking dismally, while from time to time a toad sent its short, monotonous, and gloomy note to the stars. Strange to say, I was no longer frightened; I was surrounded by a landscape so utterly unreal that the strangest freaks of nature would not have surprised me at all.

"How long this situation lasted I am unable to tell, for I finally dozed off to sleep. When I awoke, the moon was gone and the sky was covered with clouds. The water splashed dismally, the wind

was blowing, it was cold and completely dark. I finished the brandy and lay listening to the rustling of the reeds and the murmur of the river. I tried to see, but failed to distinguish the boat or even my hands, although I held them close to my eyes. The darkness, however, was slowly decreasing. Suddenly I thought I saw a shadow glide past me. I shouted to it and a voice responded: it was a fisherman. I called to him and told him of my plight. He brought his boat alongside mine and both began tugging at the chain. The anchor still would not yield. A cold, rainy day was setting in, one of those days that bring disaster and sadness. I perceived another boat, which we hailed. The owner added his strength to ours, and little by little the anchor gave way. It came up very slowly, laden with considerable weight. Finally a black heap appeared and we dragged it into my boat. It was the body of an old woman, with a big stone tied around her neck!"

SUICIDES

SCARCELY a day goes by without the newspapers containing an account like this:

"Tenants of No. 40 B —— street were startled Wednesday night by the report of two shots that proceeded from the apartment occupied by Mr. X——. The door was burst open and he was found on the floor, in a pool of blood, his hand still grasping the revolver with which he committed suicide. Mr. X—— was fifty-seven years old and prosperous. He had everything to live for, and no reason can be ascribed for his tragic act."

What grief and secret despair, what burning sorrows lead these people, who are supposed to be happy, to end their lives? Financial troubles and love tragedies are hinted at, but as nothing really precise ever becomes known, these deaths are pronounced "mysterious."

A letter that was found on the table of one of these suicides, who wrote it during his last night on earth, with the loaded pistol within his reach, has come into our possession. We deem it interesting,

though it reveals no great tragedy such as one usually expects to find at the bottom of these rash acts. It only tells of the slow succession of the little ills of life, of the inevitable disorganization of a solitary existence weaned from its illusions; it makes clear those tragic endings which no others but people of high-strung, supersensitive temperaments can understand.

This is the letter:

"It is midnight. When I finish this letter I intend to destroy myself. Why? I will endeavor to explain, not for those who read this, but for myself, in order to strengthen my failing courage and to convince myself of the now fatal necessity of my determination which, if not carried out to-night, could only be deferred.

"I was brought up by parents who believed in everything, and so I, too, believed. My dream lasted a long time. But now its last illusions have fled.

"The past few years have wrought a great change in me. The things that used to seem most alluring and desirable have lost their attraction. The true meaning of life has dawned upon me in all its brutal reality; the true reason of love disgusts me even with poetical sentiment.

"We are nothing but the eternal toys of illusions as foolish as they are charming, which reblossom as soon as they fade.

"Getting on in years, I became resigned to the utter shallowness of life, to the uselessness of any effort, to the vanity of any hope, when suddenly to-night, after dinner, I viewed the futility of everything in a different light.

"Formerly I was happy. Everything charmed me; the women I met in the streets; the streets themselves; my own home; even the shape of my clothes was a subject of interest to me. But finally the repetition of these visions bored and annoyed me; I felt like a theater-goer seeing the same play night after night.

"During the last thirty years I have arisen at the same hour; have dined at the same place, eating the same things served at the same times by different waiters.

"I have tried to travel! But the sensation of forlornness that came over me in strange places deterred me. I felt so isolated and small on this immense earth that I hastened to return home.

"But the furnishings of my apartment, that have not been changed in thirty odd years, the worn places on the chairs which I recollect when they were new, even the odor of the place (for after a while each home acquires a distinctive atmosphere) gave me every night an awful, nauseating sense of melancholy.

"Does not everything repeat itself in an eternal, heartrending fashion? The way in which I put my key into the latch-hole, the spot where I find the match-box, the first glance I give the room after striking a light, all these little things make me desire to fling myself out of the window, so as to end for good and all the series of monotonous incidents which fill life and from which there is no escape.

"Every day when shaving in front of my little mirror I feel like cutting my throat; the same face with soap on its cheeks that stares at me has driven me many a time to cry out from sheer despondency.

"To-day I hardly care to meet the people whose society I used to enjoy, because I know too well what they are going to say and what I shall reply; the trend of their thoughts is as familiar as the drift of their arguments. Each brain is like a circus-ring around which gallops a poor, imprisoned horse. No matter what our efforts or dodges may be, we cannot escape from the circular ring, which has no unexpected turns, no door opening on the unknown. We must go around forever, through the same joys, the same jokes, the same beliefs, habits, disgusts.

"The fog was dreadful to-night. It covered the boulevard, dimming the gas-lights that shone like so many smoky candles. A heavier weight than usual oppressed me. My digestion was probably in bad shape. A good digestion is a great blessing. It gives to artists inspiration, to thinkers clear ideas, to young men amorous desires, and to everyone happiness.

"It lets us eat our fill and, after all, this is the greatest satisfaction. A weak stomach predisposes one to scepticism and unbelief, and incites bad dreams and morbidity. I have noticed it very, very often. Perhaps I would not care to die, to-night, if my digestion were perfect.

"When I seated myself in the chair in which I have sat every night the past thirty years, I glanced around and felt so depressed that I thought I should become distracted.

"I wondered how I could escape from myself? To be occupied appeared to me even more intolerable than to remain inactive. I had the idea of putting my old papers in order. I have intended to arrange them for a long time. For thirty years I

have flung letters and bills together in the same drawer, and the confusion resulting therefrom has often caused me a great deal of trouble. But the mere idea of straightening out anything gives me such mental and physical distress that I never have had sufficient courage to undertake the odious task.

"So I sat down at my desk and opened it, intending to look over my old papers and to destroy some. At first I felt quite helpless before the heaps of yellowed leaves; but finally I extricated one of them.

"Never, if you value your life, dare touch the desk or the tomb that contains old letters! And if by chance you should open it, close your eyes so as to shut out the letters, lest a long-forgotten but suddenly recognized handwriting awaken a world of recollections; take the fatal pages and throw them into the fire, and when they are ashes stamp them into invisible dust or else you will be lost—as I have been—for the last hour.

"The first letters I picked out did not interest me. They were from men I meet once in a while, and for whom I feel no great interest. But all at once an envelope attracted my eyes. It bore my name written in a broad, firm hand; tears filled my eyes. Here was a letter from my dearest friend, the one in whom I used to confide in my youth, and who knew my hopes; he arose before me so clearly with his outstretched hand and good-natured smile, that a shudder ran through my frame. Yes, the dead come back, for I saw him! Our memory is a world far more perfect than the real universe, for it brings to life those who have gone forever.

"With misty eyes and trembling hands I read over all the letters, while my poor crushed heart throbbed with a pain so acute that I groaned aloud like a man whose limbs are being tortured.

"I went over my whole life, and it was like floating along a familiar river. I recognized people whose names long ago had been blotted from my mind. Only their faces had stamped themselves upon my memory. My mother's letters revived recollections of the old servants of our household, brought back all the little insignificant details that impress themselves on a child's brain.

"Yes, I even saw my mother as she looked in the gowns of years ago, with the changed appearance she would assume with each new style of hair-dressing she successively adopted. She haunted me most in a silk gown of some gorgeous pattern, and I remembered what she said to me one day, wearing that robe: 'Robert, my child, if you fail to hold yourself erect, you will be round-shouldered all your life.'

"On opening another drawer, I suddenly gazed on my love trinkets — a satin slipper, a torn handkerchief, several locks of hair, some pressed flowers, even a garter.

"My romances, whose heroines, if still living, must have white hair, arose before me with all the bitterness of loved things forever gone. Oh! the young brows shaded by golden hair, the clasped hands, the speaking glances, the throbbing hearts, the smile that promises the lips, and the lips that promise all — then the first kiss — long, unending, with no thought but of the immense ecstasy to come!

"I grasped with both hands the cherished tokens and I kissed them passionately. My harassed soul beheld each one of my loves at the moment of sweet surrender — and I suffered worse torments than those imagined in the descriptions of hell.

"A single letter remained. It had been written by me and was dictated fifty years ago by my teacher.

"It ran:

"'My Dear Mamma:

"'I am seven years old to-day. As it is the age of reason, I want to thank you for having brought me into this world.

"'Your loving little son,

"'Robert.'

"This was the last. I had arrived at the very beginning of my life and I turned to face the prospect of the remaining years. I see nothing but a hideous and lonely old age with all its accompanying disablements — all is over, over, over! Nobody to care for me.

"The revolver lies here on the table. I am loading it — Never read over your old letters."

And this is the reason why so many men kill themselves, while one searches their lives in vain for the discovery of some hidden tragedy.

MADEMOISELLE PEARL

WHAT a curious fancy I had, when I chose Mademoiselle Pearl for queen that evening!

I go every year to celebrate Twelfth Night at the home of my dear friend Chantal. My father, who was his most intimate comrade, took me there when I was a child. I have kept up the custom, and I shall continue it, without doubt, as long as there is a Chantal in the world.

The Chantals lead a singular existence; they live in Paris as if they inhabited Grasse, Yvetot, or Pont-à-Mousson. They possess a house situated in a little garden, close to the Observatory. There they dwell as quietly as if in the country. Of Paris, the real Paris, they know nothing, they suspect nothing; they are far from it, very far! At times, however, they make a little journey to it. Madame Chantal goes there to lay in her supplies, as they say in the family.

Mademoiselle Pearl, who keeps the keys of the kitchen closets (for the linen closets are administered by the mistress of the house herself), announces that the sugar is getting low, that there are no more canned things, that there is not much coffee left in the coffee-sack. Thus put on guard against famine, Madame Chantal takes account of the stock remaining on hand, making notes in a blank book. After she has written down a great many figures, she gives herself up to long calculations at first, and afterward to long discussions with Mademoiselle Pearl. They finish at last by agreeing, and by fixing upon certain quantities of each commodity with which they wish to provide themselves for three months: sugar, rice, prunes, coffee, preserves, cans of peas and of beans, lobster, salted or smoked fish, etc., etc. Then they decide upon a day for the purchases, and when it arrives they go in a cab, with a railing around its top, to a large grocery situated on the other side of the bridge, in the new quarter.

Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Pearl make this trip together, mysteriously, and return in time for dinner, tired out, as well as considerably excited and shaken up by the cab, the roof of which is covered with packages and bags like a house-moving van.

For the Chantals, all that part of Paris situated on the other side of the bridge constitutes the new quarter, a quarter inhabited by a strange population, noisy, not very correct, who pass their days in dissipation and their nights in *fêtes*, and who throw their money out of the windows. From time to time, however, the Chantals take their daughters to the theater, to the Opera Comique or to the Théâtre

Français, if the play has been recommended by the paper that Monsieur Chantal reads.

The daughters are now nineteen and seventeen years of age; they are pretty girls, tall and fresh, well brought up, almost too carefully, in fact, so that they are passed by unnoticed, like two pretty dolls. The idea would never come to me to pay attention to the Chantal girls; hardly would one dare to speak to them, so immaculate are they; one is afraid almost to bow to them for fear of doing something improper.

The father is a charming man, highly educated, very frank, very cordial, but a man who loves above everything repose, calm, tranquillity, and who has contributed very much toward the mummifying of his family, in order to live at his ease, in a stagnant immobility. He reads a good deal, talks with pleasure, and is quite emotional. The absence of contact with his neighbors and of rubbing elbows with the world has made his moral skin very delicate and sensitive. The least unpleasant thing moves him deeply and makes him suffer. The Chantals have certain limited social connections, however, chosen with care in the neighborhood. They exchange, also, two or three visits a year with relatives who live at a distance.

As for myself, I always go to dine with them on the fifteenth of August and on Twelfth Night, or the celebration of the Epiphany. These visits are a part of my social duty. On the fifteenth of August they invite a few other friends, but at the Twelfth Night dinner I am the only invited guest.

In the particular year that I have in mind, I had dined at the Chantals, as in other years, to celebrate the Epiphany. According to custom, I embraced

Monsieur Chantal, Madame Chantal, and Mademoiselle Pearl, and I made a ceremonious bow to the Mademoiselles Louise and Pauline.

They questioned me about a thousand things,—the happenings on the boulevards, political topics, what the public thought of affairs in the Tonquin, and about our political representatives. Madame Chantal, a stout woman, who always gives me the impression of something square, in the nature of building-blocks or stones, was in the habit of making use of this phrase as a conclusion to all discussions of politics: "That seed does not promise much for the future."

Why have I always imagined that the ideas of Madame Chantal are square? I cannot tell you; but everything she says takes that form in my mind: a large square, with four symmetrical angles. There are other persons whose ideas always seem to me round and rolling, like hoops. From the moment they begin to say something, it rolls, it goes, it comes out by ten, twenty, fifty ideas, all round, some big and some little, which I fancy I can see running, one behind another, to the end of the horizon. Other persons seem to have pointed ideas. But such fancies are of slight importance.

We placed ourselves at table according to custom, and finished our dinner without anything being said to remember especially. At dessert they brought on the Twelfth Night cake. Now, each year Monsieur Chantal was king of the feast. Was this the effect of continued chance, or was it a family arrangement? I do not know, but, at any rate, he always found the sign of his royalty in his piece of cake, and he always named Madame Chantal for his queen. So

this night I was surprised to find in a mouthful of the cake something very hard, which almost broke a tooth. I took out the object carefully from my mouth, and perceived a little porcelain doll not larger than a bean. I was surprised into saying: "Ah!" They looked at me, and Monsieur Chantal cried, clapping his hands: "It's Gaston! It's Gaston! Live the King! Live the King!"

Everyone took up the chorus, "Live the King!" and I blushed up to my ears, as one blushes often without reason, in certain situations that make one look a little foolish. I sat there with lowered eyes, holding between two fingers this absurd object, forcing myself to laugh, and not knowing what to say or do, when Chantal continued: "Now you must choose the queen."

Then I was confused. In a second a thousand thoughts, a thousand suppositions crossed my mind. Was it their wish to make me designate one of their daughters? Was it a trick to make me say which one I preferred? Was it a soft, light, insensible thrust of the parents toward a possible marriage? The idea of marriage prowls around continually in all houses where there are grown girls, and it takes every form, every disguise, every means. A ridiculous fear of compromising myself took possession of me, and also an extreme bashfulness before the attitude, so obstinately correct and restrained, of the Mademoiselles Louise and Pauline. To elect one of them to the detriment of the other seemed to me as difficult as to choose between two drops of water, and then the fear of venturing into a situation where I might be led into matrimonial ties in spite of myself, softly, by

means as discreet, as imperceptible, and as calm as that by which this insignificant badge of royalty had arrived to me,—all that troubled me greatly.

Suddenly I had an inspiration, however, and I handed to Mademoiselle Pearl the symbolic doll. Everyone was at first surprised, then they appreciated, without doubt, my delicacy and my discretion, for they applauded me with enthusiasm. They cried "Live the Queen! Live the Queen!"

As to her,—poor old maid!—she quite lost her head; she trembled, was frightened, and stammered: "No! no! no! Not me! I beg of you! Not me, I beg of you!"

Then, for the first time of my life, I looked attentively at Mademoiselle Pearl's face and figure, and asked myself whom she was. I was used to seeing her in that house, as one sees old upholstered armchairs in which one has ensconced themselves since childhood without ever having taken notice of them. Some day, one can't tell the reason why,—because a ray of sunlight falls on the chair, perhaps,—one says suddenly: "Why, that is very curious, that chair!" and one discovers that the wood has been carved by an artist, and that the covering is remarkable. I had never taken any notice before of Mademoiselle Pearl.

She was a part of the Chantal family,—that was all, but how? Upon what footing was she there? She had a tall, thin person, not likely to attract observation, yet not insignificant. She was treated in a familiar, friendly fashion, better than a mere housekeeper, but not quite cordially enough for a relative. I remembered then many shades of distinction which I had never observed before. Madame Chantal called

her "Pearl." The young girls said "Mademoiselle Pearl," and Monsieur Chantal addressed her only as "Mademoiselle," with an air more respectful, perhaps.

I observed her with interest. How old was she? Forty years? Yes, fully forty years. She was not old, that girl, but she was growing old. I was struck suddenly by that thought. She dressed herself quaintly and arranged her hair ridiculously, and yet she herself was not ridiculous, because she had such simple, natural grace, a veiled grace, hidden with care. What a strange creature, truly! How was it that I had never watched her more closely? She arranged her hair grotesquely, as I have said,—her head being encircled with little, old-fashioned curls, altogether absurd; but she had a high, calm, virginal forehead, marked by two deep lines, like the marks of prolonged grief. Her eyes were blue, large and soft, timid, bashful, and humble,—beautiful eyes, which had remained full of the naïve wonder of a young girl's glance, although they showed that they had known sorrow, which had softened them, without impairing their clearness. The whole face was fine and discreet, one of those faces that are never worn or faded by fatigue or the great emotions of life. What a beautiful mouth, and what pretty teeth! But one would have said she did not dare to smile.

I compared her with Madame Chantal. Certainly, Mademoiselle Pearl was better, a hundred times better, finer, more proud, and noble. I was surprised at my own observations. The champagne was being served. I held my glass up to the Queen, wishing her good health in a well-turned compliment. She

would have liked, I thought, to hide her face in her napkin; but, as she tasted the clear wine, everyone cried: "The Queen drinks! The Queen drinks!" She then became quite red, and choked a little. Everyone laughed, but not unkindly, and I could see that she was well loved in the house.

When dinner was over, Chantal took me by the arm. It was the hour for his cigar, the sacred hour! When he was alone, he went into the street to smoke it; but when he had guests at dinner, they went into the billiard-room, and he played and smoked. That evening they had even made a fire in the room, on account of the *fête;* and my old friend took his cue, a slender one, which he chalked with great care. Then he said: "Go ahead, my boy!"

He always spoke to me in this familiar way, although I was twenty-five years of age, but he had known me since I was a child.

I began the game, therefore. I made a few carooms and missed a few others; but, as the thought of Mademoiselle Pearl was still in my mind, I said suddenly: "Tell me, Monsieur Chantal, is Mademoiselle Pearl a relative of yours?"

He stopped playing, much astonished, and looked at me.

"What, you don't know?" he said, "You don't know the story of Mademoiselle Pearl?"

"Why, no."

"Your father never told it to you?"

"No, Monsieur."

"Well, that is strange! That is, indeed, very strange! It is a rather remarkable story, I assure you."

He was quiet for a moment, and then continued:

"If you only knew how odd it is that you should ask me that question to-day,—on the feast of the Epiphany."

"Why, Monsieur Chantal?"

"Ah, why? Listen! A strange thing happened forty-one years ago,—exactly forty-one years ago to-day. We lived then at Rouy-le-Tors, on the fortification: but it is necessary to describe the house that you may understand the circumstances clearly.

"Rouy is built on the side of a hill, or rather on the side of a hump, which commands a great extent of prairie. We had there a house with a pretty suspended garden, hung in the air from the old fortifications. Therefore, the house was in the town, standing in the street, whereas the garden dominated the plain.

"There was also a gate opening from this garden to the plain, which was at the foot of a secret stairway that went down through the walls, like those you read of in storybooks. A road passed the gate, which was furnished with a large bell, for the country people to ring in order to save the trip around the walls when they brought their provisions there.

"You understand the situation of the place, do you not? That year, at the Epiphany, it had snowed for a whole week. One would have said the end of the world was at hand. When we went to the walls to look out on the plain, it made us shiver to our bones to see that immense expanse, all white and frozen, and glistening as if varnished. One would have said the good Lord had done the world up in a package, to send it to the garret for old worlds. It was very somber, I assure you.

"We were living all together then, and we were quite a numerous family: my father, my mother, my uncle and my aunt, my two brothers, and my four cousins; they were pretty little girls.

"I married the youngest cousin. Of all those people there are only three remaining: my wife, I, and my sister-in-law, who lived at Marseilles. *Sacristi!* how they drop off, a family like that! I was fifteen years old then, and I am fifty-six now.

"We were going to celebrate the *fête* of Twelfth Night, and we were all very gay! Everyone was waiting for dinner in the drawing-room when my oldest brother, Jacques, said: 'A dog has been howling out on the prairie since ten minutes ago; it must be some poor lost dog.'

"He had not finished speaking, when the bell of the garden sounded. It had a deep tone, like a church bell, and made one think of the dead. Everyone shivered. My father called the servant and told him to go and see who was ringing. We waited in silence, thinking of the snow which covered all the earth. When the man returned, he said that he had seen no one. The dog howled all the time, and the direction of his voice never changed.

"We placed ourselves at the table; but we were a little upset, especially the younger children. Everything went well until the roast came in, when suddenly the bell began to ring again, three times running, three long, heavy strokes that vibrated to the tips of our fingers, cutting off our talk short. We waited, looking at one another, holding our forks in the air, listening, and seized by a kind of supernatural fear.

"My mother spoke at last: 'It is astonishing that they waited so long to return; don't go alone, Baptiste; one of these gentlemen will accompany you.'

"My uncle Francis rose. He was a kind of Hercules, very proud of his strength, and afraid of nothing in the world. My father said to him, 'Take the gun. No one knows who may be there.' But my uncle took only a cane, and went out immediately with the servant. We remained trembling with terror and agony, without eating and without speaking. My father tried to reassure us. 'You will see,' said he, 'that it is some beggar, or some one that was passing and has become confused and lost in the snow. After ringing the first time, and seeing that no one came to open at once, he probably tried to find the road again; then not being successful, he returned to our gate.'

"The absence of our uncle seemed to last an hour. He returned at last, furious, saying, 'I found nothing! Hang it all, it is some joker! Nothing was there but that cursed dog, who is howling outside the walls. If I had taken a gun, I would have killed him to make him quiet.'

"We returned to our dinner, but everyone was anxious; we felt very certain that this was not the end of the mystery, that something was going to happen, that the bell would ring again soon. And it did ring, just when the Twelfth Night cake was being cut. All the men rose together. My uncle Francis, who had taken champagne, swore with so much fury that he was going to massacre the intruder, whatever it was, that my mother and my aunt threw themselves upon him to prevent him from going out.

My father, though very calm, and in spite of the fact that he was a little crippled since he had broken his leg in a fall from his horse, declared in his turn that he wished to see what the noise was, and that he would go to investigate the mystery. My brothers, aged eighteen and twenty years, ran to get their guns; and, as no one paid any attention to me, I picked up a gun used in the garden and made ready to accompany the expedition.

"We started immediately. My father and my uncle went ahead with Baptiste, who carried a lantern. My brothers, Jacques and Paul, followed, and I went behind them, in spite of the supplications of my mother, who remained with my aunt and my cousins on the threshold of the house.

"The snow had begun to fall again during the past hour, and the trees were laden with it. The pines bowed under this heavy white cloak, which resembled white pyramids or great cones of sugar; and one could hardly distinguish, through the curtain of hurrying flakes, the smaller shrubs resembling pale shadows in the gloom. The snow fell so thickly that we could not see more than ten steps ahead of us. The lantern threw a great light before us, but when we began to descend the spiral stairway cut through the wall, I became really frightened. It seemed to me that some one was walking behind me; that some one was going to seize me by the shoulders and run off with me; and I wished very much to return; but as I should have had to cross the garden alone, I did not dare to turn back.

"I heard some one open the gate that led to the plain, and then my uncle shouted angrily: 'Hang it

all! he has gone again! If I could only see his shadow I'd follow him and settle his affairs for him, the rascal!'

"It was discouraging to took at the wide expanse of the field, or rather to feel it before us, for we could not see it distinctly; all that was visible was an endless veil of snow, above, below, in front, on the right, on the left, everywhere.

"My uncle, highly irritated, continued: 'There's that dog howling again; I'm going to show him how I shoot. That will be so much gained.'

"But my father, who was a kind man, replied: 'It would be better to bind him and bring him home; the poor animal is crying from hunger. He howls for help, the poor thing! He calls like a man in distress. Let us go to him.'

"So we started to cross the plain through the thick, continuous fall of snow, through the white foam which filled the air, chilling our flesh as it fell upon us, with a sensation as if we had been burned, at each sharp, stinging touch of the icy flakes. We sank to our knees in the soft, cold mass, and had to raise our legs very high in walking. The farther we advanced, the clearer and louder became the howl of the dog. Suddenly my uncle called out: 'There he is!'

"We stopped to reconnoiter, as one should do before an enemy, when meeting him in the night. I saw nothing myself at first; but when I came up to the others I perceived him. He was an alarming and fantastic creature to look at, this dog,—a great, black shepherd's dog, with long hair and a head like a wolf, standing in the light thrown by our lantern on

the snow. He did not move nor howl, but stood still and looked at us.

"'It is strange,' said my uncle, 'that he neither comes up to us nor runs away from us. I have a good mind to let him have the contents of my gun!'

"My father spoke again, in a firm voice: 'No, we must take him home.'

"'But he is not alone,' said Jacques. 'Look! There is something there on the ground beside him.'

"Then we saw that there really was something beside him, a large gray mass, the outlines of which were impossible to distinguish. We moved forward with precaution.

"The dog sat down as we approached. He did not appear to be ferocious, but seemed, on the contrary, to be glad that he had succeeded in his effort to attract attention. My father went straight to him and patted him. The dog licked his hands; and then we saw that he was fastened to the wheel of a little carriage, a sort of baby-carriage wrapped entirely around with several woolen covers. We opened these wrappings with care, and as Baptiste brought his lantern to the front of the little carriage, which resembled a nest on wheels, we saw inside it a baby, sleeping peacefully.

"We were so stupefied that we could not say a word. My father was the first to recover his wits, and, as he possessed a warm heart and an emotional nature, he placed his hand on the cover of the carriage and said: 'Poor abandoned one, thou shalt be one of ours!' And he ordered my brother Jacques to roll the carriage, containing the little foundling, back to the house.

"As we retraced our steps my father spoke again, as if thinking aloud: 'Some love-child, whose mother has come to my gate on this night of the Epiphany in remembrance of the infant Jesus!'

"He stopped again, and with all his strength he called four times across the night toward the four corners of the sky: 'We have found him!' Then, placing his hand on the shoulder of his brother, he said: 'If you had shot the dog, Francis!' My uncle did not reply, but in the darkness of the night he made a sign of the cross, for he was very religious in spite of his boisterous manners. We had unfastened the dog, and it followed us closely across the snowy fields.

"Ah! it is pleasant to remember our reception at the house! We had a good deal of trouble to get the carriage up the winding stairway; but we succeeded at last, and rolled it inside the vestibule.

"How delightful it was to see my mother, and how happy and bustling she was! And my four little cousins (the youngest was six years old) acted like chickens around a nest. Finally my mother took the sleeping baby from its odd cradle, and carried it to the nursery. It was a girl, apparently about six weeks old, and in its linen ten thousand francs were found, which papa invested for her as a *dot*. It was evidently, therefore, not a child of poor people, but perhaps the offspring of some noble and a little shop-girl of the city, but nothing by which its identity could be traced was ever found. The dog itself was a stranger in the country, and was never recognized by any one. In any case, the person who came to ring three times at our gate knew the character of

my parents well to have chosen them as guardians for the child.

"That is the way that Mademoiselle Pearl entered the home of the Chantals. She was not named 'Mademoiselle Pearl' until later. She was baptized first: 'Marie Simonne Claire,' Claire serving her for family name.

"I assure you that it was a strange return to the dining-room with the addition to the family circle of the baby, now awake and looking around her, with her vague blue eyes, at the people and the lights.

"We placed ourselves at the table again and the cake was divided—I was king; and I chose for queen Mademoiselle Pearl, as you did a little while ago. She was hardly aware of the honor offered to her that night.

"Well, the child was adopted and brought up in our family. The years passed, and she grew to be a sweet child. She was kind, gentle, and obedient. Everyone loved her, and would have spoiled her abominably, if my mother had not prevented it. My mother had an orderly nature and had also a high regard for the distinctions among classes. She consented to treat the little Marie as kindly as she treated her own sons, but she insisted that the difference which separated us should be well marked, and that everything should be understood in its proper light. As soon as the child could understand the matter, my mother made known to her the story of her advent among us, and caused to penetrate softly, and even tenderly, into the mind of the little one, the fact that she was to the Chantals a daughter found and adopted, but yet, in a word, not one of us.

"Marie comprehended this situation with singular intelligence and a surprising instinctive knowledge of what she should do; she understood how to take and keep the place that was assigned to her, with the utmost grace, tact, and kindness, the observation of which often affected my father to tears. My mother herself was so much moved by the passionate gratitude and devotion of the tender young creature, that she began to call her 'My daughter.' Sometimes, when the little one had done something especially good and delicate, my mother would raise her spectacles on her forehead, which was always a sign of earnestness with her, and say: 'Why, she is a pearl, a real pearl, that child!' That name always clung to the little Marie, who became, and has remained for us, 'Mademoiselle Pearl.'"

Monsieur Chantal ceased speaking. He was seated on the billiard-table, his legs hanging from it, and he held a billiard-ball in his left hand, while in the right he held a cloth which served to wipe the chalk spots off the slate. He was a little red in the face, and his voice was slightly indistinct, as he began to speak again, after a short silence. He talked about himself now, traveling back slowly through his memories, passing in review bygone happenings that were awakened in his mind, as when a person walks through the old family garden where he played when a boy, and where each tree, each path, each plant, the pointed hollies, the laurels, the yew-trees, whose red, succulent berries crush so easily between the teeth, all recall to him some little event of his past life, those insignificant yet delightful things which form the foundation and the warp of our existence.

I remained in front of him, my back to the wall, my hands resting on a billiard-cue, listening to him and observing him.

Suddenly he said, musingly, "*Cristi*, how beautiful she was at eighteen! And how graceful and perfect! Ah! the beauty! The good, brave, charming girl! She had such eyes! Blue eyes they were—transparent and clear—such as I never saw the equal of—never!"

He was silent once more. After a moment or two, I asked: "Why did she never marry?"

"Why?" he replied. "She never wished to marry. She had thirty thousand francs of *dot*, and she received many offers, but she never wished to marry! She seemed sad in those days—I mean when I married my cousin, little Charlotta, my wife, to whom I had been betrothed for six years."

I looked at Monsieur Chantal, and it seemed to me that I saw into his soul, that I suddenly saw into one of those dramas of an honest heart without reproach, one of those unacknowledged and unsounded passions, of which no one knew, not even those who are the mute and resigned victims of them.

An audacious curiosity forced me on. I said: "It was you who ought to have married her, Monsieur Chantal."

He looked at me, startled, and said: "I? Marry whom?"

"Mademoiselle Pearl."

"Why do you say that, Gaston?"

"Because you loved her more than you loved your cousin."

He looked at me with strange eyes, round, con-

fused, then he stammered: "I loved her—I? How do you know? Who told you that?"

"The deuce! it's easily seen, and it was on her account that you delayed so long your marriage to your cousin, who waited for you six years."

He let fall the ball that he held in his left hand, and seized the chalky cloth with both hands, and, covering his face with it, he began to sob. He wept in an absurdly copious fashion, reminding me of a sponge, which weeps all over when one squeezes it. He held the chalked cloth still closer to his face, and made curious choking sounds in his throat. I was confused and ashamed, and wished to run away, as I did not know what to say or do.

Suddenly the voice of Madame Chantal was heard on the stairs: "Shall you finish your smoking soon?"

I opened the door and answered, "Yes, Madame, we are coming down immediately."

Then I ran toward her husband, and seizing him by the elbows, said emphatically:

"Monsieur Chantal, my friend Chantal, listen to me! Your wife is calling you, compose yourself at once! We must go downstairs. Compose yourself, I beg of you!"

He stammered: "Yes! Yes! I am coming! Poor girl! I am coming—tell her I am coming!"

And he wiped his face conscientiously with the cloth which for two or three years had been used to clear off the marks on the slate; then he showed his face, half red and half white, the forehead, the nose, the cheeks, and the chin daubed with chalk, and the eyes red and swollen, and still full of tears. I took him by the hand and drew him to his bedroom, mur-

muring: "I beg your pardon—I ask your pardon sincerely, Monsieur Chantal, for having given you pain, but I did not know—you understand!"

He gripped my hand, saying: "Yes! Yes! There are moments of difficulty sometimes—"

Then he plunged his face into the basin. When he emerged from it, he appeared hardly presentable to me yet; but I had an idea, a little ruse, to account for his peculiar appearance. As he seemed worried in looking at himself in the glass, I said, by way of a suggestion: "It will suffice if you say that you have something in your eye, and then you can weep before everyone as much as you please."

He went down rubbing his eyes with a handkerchief, as I suggested. They worried about him; everyone tried to find the speck in his eye, and they related instances of similar cases where it had become necessary to bring in a doctor.

I had joined Mademoiselle Pearl, and I looked at her, tormented by an eager curiosity, which at last became insufferable. She must have been really very pretty, with her soft eyes, so large, so calm, so wide open that they had the appearance of never being closed like the eyes of other human beings. Her costume was a little bizarre,—it was the dress of a veritable old maid, but, while it disfigured her somewhat, it did not render her altogether awkward.

It seemed to me that I could read her heart, as I had seen a little while ago into the heart of Monsieur Chantal; that I could see that humble life, from its beginning to its end; but something pushed me on, a harassing necessity to question her, to learn whether she had loved him, whether she had suffered,

as he had, that long, secret, bitter agony, which no one sees, no one knows, no one guesses, but which makes itself manifest at night in the solitude of the darkened chamber. I looked at her, and I saw her heart beat beneath her ruffled bodice, and I asked myself whether that gentle, candid creature had wept each night upon her pillow, and sobbed, with her whole body shaken by the violence of her emotion, while tossing uneasily upon the bed.

I said to her in a low voice, with the caution of a child who breaks a toy to see what is inside: "If you had seen Monsieur Chantal weep a short time ago, you would have pitied him."

She trembled: "What? He was weeping?" she asked, startled.

"Ah, yes, Mademoiselle Pearl, he wept indeed!"

"Why did he weep?" she inquired, much moved.

"On your account," I replied.

"On my account?" she said, in surprised tones.

"Yes. He told me how he had loved you, and what it had cost him to marry his cousin instead of you!"

Her pale face seemed to me to grow longer; her eyes, usually so wide open and so calm, closed so suddenly that they seemed to have closed forever. She slipped from her chair to the floor, sinking as softly and slowly as would a falling robe.

"Help! Help! Mademoiselle Pearl is ill!" I cried.

Madame Chantal and her daughters hurried to the spot; and while they were getting water, towels, and vinegar, I took my hat and left the house.

I walked rapidly, my heart shaken, my mind full of remorse and regret. Yet at times I was satisfied

with my own action; it seemed to me that I had done something necessary and praiseworthy.

I asked myself: Have I done wrong, or did I do right? They had had for years a something in their hearts, as one has sometimes a gunshot in a closed wound. And now, would they not be happier? It was too late for their torture to begin anew, and yet soon enough for them to recall it to mind with tenderness. And perhaps some evening in the coming springtime, moved by a ray of moonlight thrown on the grass at their feet, they may take each other's hands and gently press them, in memory of all that cruel and smothered suffering. Perhaps, too, that short embrace will cause to pass through their veins a little of that rapture which they have never known, and will give to them—to those dead souls resurrected in a moment—that swift and divine sensation of sweet intoxication, of tender folly, which brings to lovers more of happiness in a fraction of a second than others ever know during a lifetime!

A MIRACLE

DOCTOR BONENFANT was searching his memory, saying, half aloud: "A Christmas story—some remembrance of Christmas?"

Suddenly he cried: "Yes, I have one, and a strange one too; it is a fantastic story. I have seen a miracle! yes, ladies, a miracle, and on Christmas night."

It astonishes you to hear me speak thus, a man who believes scarcely anything. Nevertheless, I have seen a miracle! I have seen it, I tell you, seen, with my own eyes, that is what I call seeing.

Was I very much surprised, you ask? Not at all; because if I do not believe from your view point, I believe in faith, and I know that it can remove mountains. I could cite many examples; but I might make you indignant, and I should risk diminishing the effect of my story.

In the first place, I must confess that if I have not been convinced and converted by what I have seen,

I have at least been strongly moved; and I am going to strive to tell it to you naïvely, as if I had the credulity of an Auvergnat.

I was then a country doctor, living in the town of Rolleville, on the plains of Normandy. The winter that year was terrible. By the end of November the snow came after a week of heavy frosts. One could see from afar the great snow clouds coming from the north, and then the descent of the white flakes commenced. In one night the whole plain was in its winding-sheet. Farms, isolated in their square inclosures, behind their curtains of great trees powdered with hoar-frost, seemed to sleep under the accumulation of this thick, light covering.

No noise could reach this dead country. The crows alone in large flocks outlined long festoons in the sky, living their lives to no purpose, swooping down upon the livid fields and picking at the snow with their great beaks. There was nothing to be heard but the vague, continued whisper of this white powder as it persistently fell. This lasted for eight days and then stopped. The earth had on its back a mantle five feet in thickness. And, during the next three weeks, a sky spread itself out over this smooth, white mass, hard and glistening with frost, which was clear as blue crystal by day, and at night all studded with stars, as if the hoar-frost grew by their light.

The plain, the hedges, the elms of the inclosures, all seemed dead, killed by the cold. Neither man nor beast went out. Only the chimneys of the cottages, clothed in white linen, revealed concealed life by the fine threads of smoke which mounted straight into

the frosty air. From time to time one heard the trees crack, as if their wooden limbs were breaking under the bark. And sometimes a great branch would detach itself and fall, the resistless cold petrifying the sap and breaking the fibers. Dwellings set here and there in fields seemed a hundred miles away from one another. One lived as he could. I alone endeavored to go to my nearest clients, constantly exposing myself to the danger of remaining in some hole in the winding-sheet of snow.

I soon perceived that a mysterious terror had spread over the country. Such a plague, they thought, was not natural. They pretended that they heard voices at night, and sharp whistling and cries, as of some one passing. These cries and the whistles came, without doubt, from emigrant birds which traveled at twilight and flew in flocks toward the south. But it was impossible to make this frightened people listen to reason. Fear had taken possession of their minds, and they listened to every extraordinary event.

The forge of Father Vatinel was situated at the end of the hamlet of Epivent, on the highway, now invisible and deserted. As the people needed bread, the blacksmith resolved to go to the village. He remained some hours chattering with the inhabitants of the six houses which formed the center of the country, took his bread and his news and a little of the fear which had spread over the region and set out before night.

Suddenly, in skirting a hedge, he believed he saw an egg on the snow; yes, an egg was lying there, all white like the rest of the world. He bent over it, and in fact it was an egg. Where did it come

from? What hen could have gone out there and laid an egg in that spot? The smith was astonished; he could not comprehend it; but he picked it up and took it to his wife

"See, wife, here is an egg that I found on the way."

The woman tossed her head, replying:

"An egg on the way? And this kind of weather! You must be drunk, surely."

"No, no, my lady, it surely was at the foot of the hedge, and not frozen but still warm. Take it; I put it in my bosom so that it wouldn't cool off. You shall have it for your dinner."

The egg was soon shining in the saucepan where the soup was simmering, and the smith began to relate what he had heard around the country. The woman listened, pale with excitement.

"Surely I have heard some whistling," said she, "but it seemed to come from the chimney."

They sat down to table, ate their soup first and then, while the husband was spreading the butter on his bread, the woman took the egg and examined it with suspicious eye.

"And if there should be something in this egg," said she.

"What, think you, you would like to have in it?"

"I know very well."

"Go ahead and eat it. Don't be a fool."

She opened the egg. It was like all eggs, and very fresh. She started to eat it but hesitated, tasting, then leaving, then tasting it again. The husband said:

"Well, how does it taste, that egg?"

She did not answer, but finished swallowing it. Then, suddenly, she set her eyes on her husband, fixed haggard, and excited, raised her arms, turned and twisted them, convulsed from head to foot, and rolled on the floor, sending forth horrible shrieks. All night she struggled in these frightful spasms, trembling with fright, deformed by hideous convulsions. The smith, unable to restrain her, was obliged to bind her. And she screamed without ceasing, with voice indefatigable:

"I have it in my body! I have it in my body!"

I was called the next day. I ordered all the sedatives known, but without effect. She was mad. Then, with incredible swiftness, in spite of the obstacle of deep snow, the news, the strange news ran from farm to farm: "The smith's wife is possessed!" And they came from all about, not daring to go into the house, to listen to the cries of the frightened woman, whose voice was so strong that one could scarcely believe it belonged to a human creature.

The curate of the village was sent for. He was a simple old priest. He came in surplice, as if to administer comfort to the dying, and pronounced with extended hands some formulas of exorcism, while four men held the foaming, writhing woman on the bed. But the spirit was not driven out.

Christmas came without any change in the weather. In the early morning the priest came for me.

"I wish," said he, "to ask you to assist me tonight at a service for this unfortunate woman. Perhaps God will work a miracle in her favor at the same hour that he was born of a woman."

I replied: "I approve heartily, M. l'Abbé, but if

the spell is to be broken by ceremony (and there could be no more propitious time to start it) she can be saved without remedies."

The old priest murmured: "You are not a believer, Doctor, but aid me, will you not?" I promised him my aid.

The evening came, and then the night. The clock on the church was striking, throwing its plaintive voice across the vast extent of white, glistening snow. Some black figures were wending their way slowly in groups, drawn by the bronze call from the bell. The full moon shone with a dull, wan light at the edge of the horizon, rendering more visible the desolation of the fields. I had taken four robust men with me, and with them repaired to the forge.

The Possessed One shouted continually, although bound to her bed. They had clothed her properly, in spite of her resistance, and now they brought her out. The church was full of people, illuminated but cold; the choir chanted their monotonous notes; the serpent hummed; the little bell of the acolyte tinkled, regulating the movements of the faithful.

I had shut the woman and her guards into the kitchen of the parish house and awaited the moment that I believed favorable.

I chose the time immediately following communion. All the peasants, men and women, had received their God, resolving to submit to the severity of His will. A great silence prevailed while the priest finished the divine mystery. Upon my order, the door opened and the four men brought in the mad woman.

When she saw the lights, the crowd on their knees, the choir illuminated, and the gilded tabernacle,

she struggled with such vigor that she almost escaped from us, and she gave forth cries so piercing that a shiver of fright ran through the church. All bowed their heads; some fled. She had no longer the form of a woman, her hands being distorted, her countenance drawn, her eyes protruding. They held her up until after the march of the choir, and then allowed her to squat on the floor.

Finally, the priest arose; he waited. When there was a moment of quiet, he took in his hands a silver vessel with bands of gold, upon which was the consecrated white wafer and, advancing some steps, extended both arms above his head and presented it to the frightened stare of the maniac. She continued to shout, but with eyes fixed upon the shining object. And the priest remained thus, motionless, as if he had been a statue.

This lasted a long, long time. The woman seemed seized with fear, fascinated; she looked fixedly at the bright vessel, trembled violently but at intervals, and cried out incessantly, but with a less piercing voice.

It happened that she could no longer lower her eyes; that they were riveted on the Host; that she could no longer groan; that her body became pliable and that she sank down exhausted. The crowd was prostrate, brows to earth.

The Possessed One now lowered her eyelids quickly, then raised them again, as if powerless to endure the sight of her God. She was silent. And then I myself perceived that her eyes were closed. She slept the sleep of the somnambulist, the hypnotist—pardon! conquered by the contemplation of the

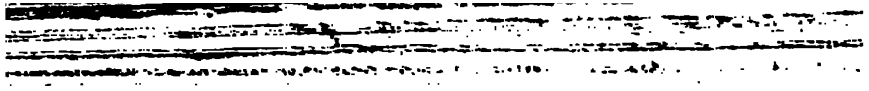
silver vessel with the bands of gold, overcome by the Christ victorious.

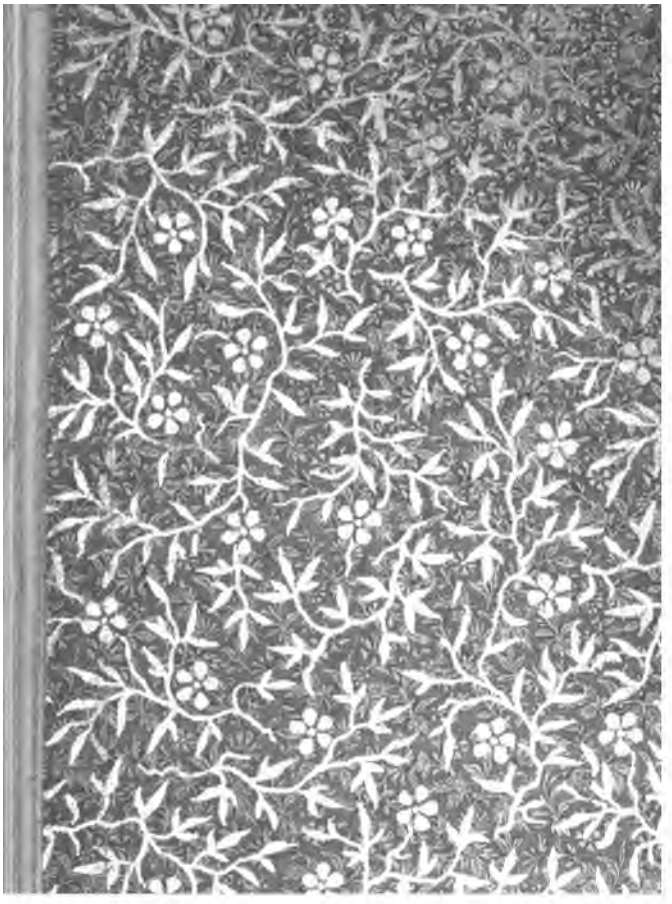
They carried her out, inert, while the priest returned to the altar. The assistants, thrown into wonderment, intoned a "Te Deum."

The smith's wife slept for the next four hours; then she awoke without any remembrance either of the possession or of the deliverance. This, ladies, is the miracle that I saw.

Doctor Bonenfant remained silent for a moment, then he added, in rather disagreeable voice:

"And I could never refuse to swear to it in writing."





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